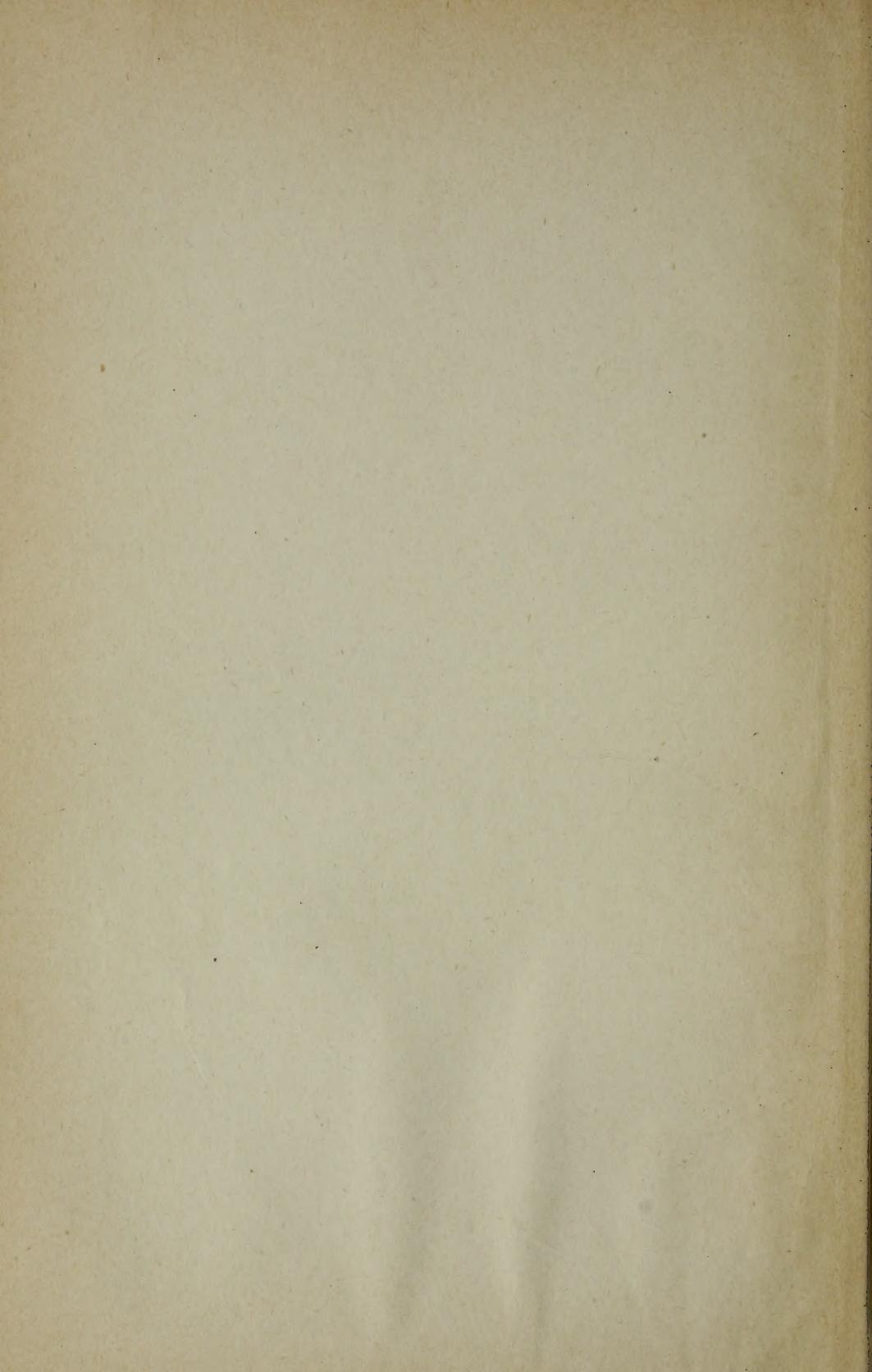


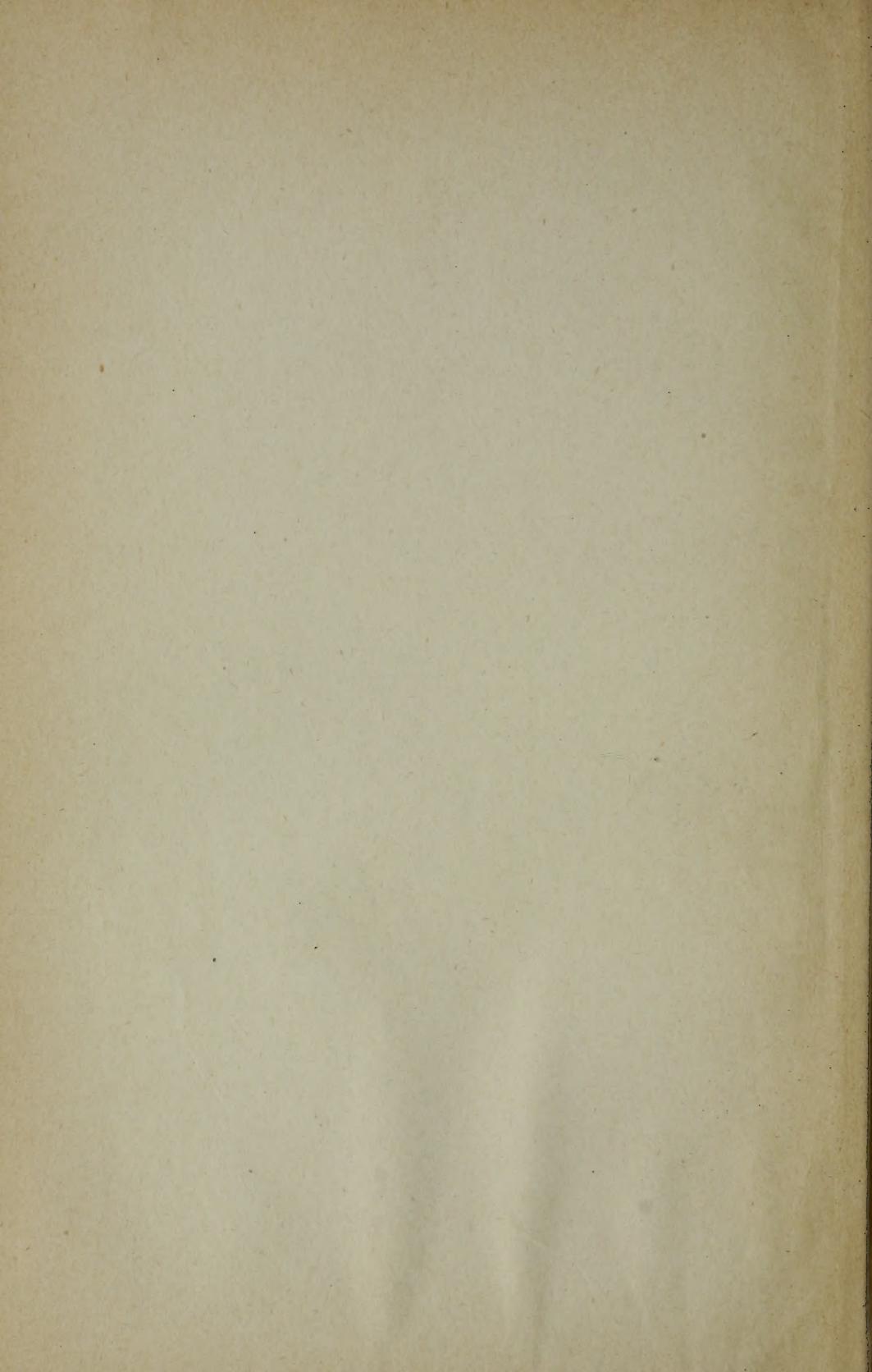
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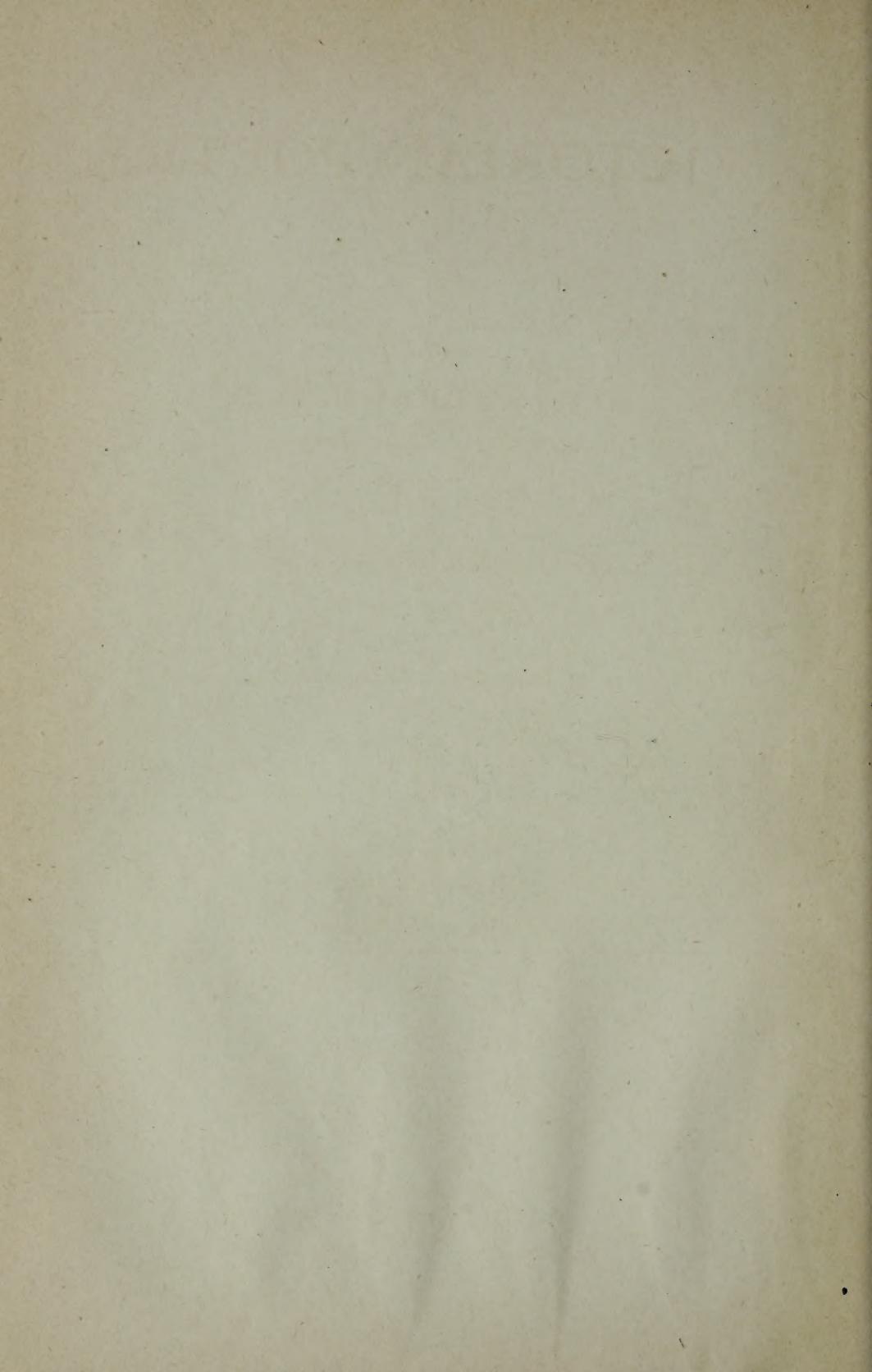
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# VICTORIAN POETRY

*Edited by*

**C. E. ANDREWS, Ph. D.**

*Author of*

THE WRITING AND READING OF VERSE

*and*

**M. O. PERCIVAL, Ph. D.**

*Editor of*

WALPOLE BALLADS

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY



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## PREFACE

This is the second half of the editors' Romantic and Victorian Poetry. The collection was originally conceived as a whole, but has been divided for the sake of smaller volumes.

The editors believe that this collection of Victorian Poetry embodies certain advantages in point of view which have come with the passage of a quarter of the present century. For instance, we now see the work of the poets of the 'nineties (and their immediate predecessors) as one of the most interesting and important periods of the literary history of the nineteenth century. This is the first anthology, the editors believe, to give adequate representation to these poets. Selection of the outstanding figures among them is still to a certain extent a personal matter, and the problem is complicated by copyright restrictions, but the editors believe that they have made a notable addition to the material available for courses in nineteenth century poetry. In this volume will be found a goodly number of poems from the work of W. S. Blunt, W. E. Henley, R. L. Stevenson, Ernest Dowson, Austin Dobson, Robert Bridges, Francis Thompson, A. E. Housman, Arthur Symons, Rudyard Kipling, and W. B. Yeats. It is not necessary to emphasize the importance of such names.

The editors have also given an unusually large amount of space to the religious and meditative poetry of the Victorian era, so arresting against the background of new and disquieting discoveries in science. Here will be found the goading doubt of Arnold and Clough, the vehement pessimism of James Thomson, the hedonism of the Rubaiyat, the devotion of Christina Rossetti, the philosophic nature poetry of George Meredith, and the mysticism of Coventry Patmore and Francis Thompson. This material, with the addition of Tennyson and Browning, embodies the poetic expression of a significant cycle of religious and poetic thought.

The Pre-Raphaelites, who constitute another important group, are liberally represented; and the logical continuation of their work can be studied in certain poets of the 'nineties.

The addition of a humorous section is an innovation, but the editors rejoice that the opportunity of making it was left to them. Here is laughter that has already lasted half a century and still shows no sign of age, and nonsense carried to a height which deserves recognition as much as unique achievement in other fields.

And yet, with all this expansion of interest, Tennyson and Browning are represented here more fully than in any similar anthology. An amount of poetry is reprinted from these two poets which would in each instance make a fair-sized volume.

One thing about the principle of selection: This is not a golden treasury. It does not aim to include every good poem of the period. A poet has not been included unless he stands for something distinctive, and unless he can be represented by enough poetry to serve as the basis for lecture or discussion. This is a book for teachers and students. In accordance with this principle, poets are often represented, not only by their finest achievements, but also by work that represents their historical development.

It should also be noted that when a poem is accompanied by only one date, that date is to be taken as the date of publication unless of course, there is notice to the contrary.

C. E. A.  
M. O. P.

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# VICTORIAN POETRY

construction - progress of Town  
Cavite, Mariana.

# ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

(1809-1892)

## CLARIBEL

A MELODY

[1830]

I

WHERE Claribel low-lieth  
The breezes pause and die,  
Letting the rose-leaves fall:  
But the solemn oak-tree sigheth,  
Thick-leaved, ambrosial,  
With an ancient melody  
Of an inward agony,  
Where Claribel low-lieth.

II

At eve the beetle boometh  
Athwart the thicket lone:  
At noon the wild bee hummeth  
About the moss'd headstone:  
At midnight the moon cometh,  
And looketh down alone.  
Her song the lintwhite swelleth,  
The clear-voiced mavis dwelleth,  
The callow throstle lispetto,  
The slumbrous wave ouwellet,  
The babbling runnel crispetto,  
The hollow grot replieth  
Where Claribel low-lieth.

## MARIANA

[1830]

'Mariana in the moated grange.' — *Measure for Measure*.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots  
Were thickly crusted, one and all:  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the pear to the garden-wall.  
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:  
Unlifted was the clinking latch;  
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch  
Upon the lonely moated grange.  
She only said, 'My life is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'

Her tears fell with the dews at even;  
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;  
She could not look on the sweet heaven,  
Either at morn or eventide.  
After the flitting of the bats,  
When thickest dark did trance the sky,  
She drew the casement-curtain by,

And glanced athwart the glooming flats.  
She only said, 'The night is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'

Upon the middle of the night,  
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:  
The cock sung out an hour ere light:  
From the dark fen the oxen's low  
Came to her: without hope of change,  
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,  
Till cold winds woke the grey-eyed morn  
About the lonely moated grange.

She only said, 'The day is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark:  
For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding grey.  
She only said, 'My life is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'

And ever when the moon was low,  
And the shrill winds were up and away,  
In the white curtain, to and fro,  
She saw the gusty shadow sway.  
But when the moon was very low,  
And wild winds bound within their cell,  
The shadow of the poplar fell  
Upon her bed, across her brow.  
She only said, 'The night is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'

All day within the dreamy house,  
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;  
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,  
Or from the crevice peer'd about.  
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,  
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,  
Old voices called her from without.  
She only said, 'My life is dreary,  
He cometh not,' she said;  
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!'

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,  
The slow clock ticking, and the sound  
Which to the wooing wind aloof  
The poplar made, did all confound  
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour  
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay  
Athwart the chambers, and the day  
Was sloping toward his western bower.  
Then, said she, 'I am very dreary,  
He will not come,' she said;  
She wept, 'I am aweary, aweary,  
Oh God, that I were dead!'

## SONG

[1830]

## I

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours  
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:  
To himself he talks;  
For at eventide, listening earnestly,  
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh  
In the walks;  
Earthward he boweth the heavy  
stalks  
Of the mouldering flowers:  
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;  
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

## II

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,  
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose  
An hour before death;  
My very heart faints and my whole soul  
grieves  
At the moist rich smell of the rotting  
leaves,  
And the breath  
Of the fading edges of box be-  
neath,  
And the year's last rose.  
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower  
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;  
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,  
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

## THE KRAKEN

[1830]

BELLOW the thunders of the upper deep;  
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,  
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep  
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee  
About his shadowy sides: above him swell  
Huge sponges of millennial growth and  
height;  
And far away into the sickly light,  
From many a wondrous grot and secret  
cell

Unnumber'd and enormous polypi  
Winnow with giant fins the slumbering  
green.

There hath he lain for ages and will lie  
Battening upon huge seaworms in his sleep,  
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;  
Then once by men and angels to be seen,  
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface  
die.

## THE POET

[1830]

THE poet in a golden clime was born,  
With golden stars above;  
Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of  
scorn,  
The love of love.

He saw thro' life and death, thro' good and  
ill,

He saw thro' his own soul.  
The marvel of the everlasting will,  
An open scroll,

Before him lay: with echoing feet he  
threaded

The secretest walks of fame:  
The viewless arrows of his thoughts were  
headed  
And wing'd with flame,

Like Indian reeds blown from his silver  
tongue,  
And of so fierce a flight,  
From Calpe unto Caucasus they sung,  
Filling with light

And vagrant melodies the winds which bore  
Them earthward till they lit;  
Then, like the arrow-seeds of the field  
flower,  
The fruitful wit

Cleaving, took root, and springing forth  
anew  
Where'er they fell, behold,  
Like to the mother plant in semblance, grew  
A flower all gold,

And bravely furnish'd all abroad to fling  
The winged shafts of truth,  
To throng with stately blooms the breathing  
spring  
Of Hope and Youth.

So many minds did gird their orbs with  
beams,  
Tho' one did fling the fire.

Heaven flow'd upon the soul in many  
dreams  
Of high desire.

*Tis ideal part flings abroad the  
winged shafts, not alone of  
beauty, as Keats would have it,  
but of truth.*

Thus truth was multiplied on truth, the world  
 Like one great garden show'd,  
 And thro' the wreaths of floating dark upcurl'd,  
 Rare sunrise flow'd.

And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise  
 Her beautiful bold brow,  
 When rites and forms before his burning eyes  
 Melted like snow.

There was no blood upon her maiden robes  
 Sunn'd by those orient skies;  
 But round about the circles of the globes  
 Of her keen eyes

And in her raiment's hem was traced in flame  
 Wisdom, a name to shake  
 All evil dreams of power — a sacred name.  
 And when she spake,

Her words did gather thunder as they ran,  
 And as the lightning to the thunder  
 Which follows it, riving the spirit of man,  
 Making earth wonder,

So was their meaning to her words. No sword  
 Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,  
 But one poor poet's scroll, and with his word  
 She shook the world.

### THE LADY OF SHALOTT

[1832. — Revised 1842.]

#### PART I

On either side the river lie  
 Long fields of barley and of rye,  
 That clothe the wold and meet the sky;  
 And thro' the field the road runs by  
 To many-tower'd Camelot;  
 And up and down the people go,  
 Gazing where the lilies blow  
 Round an island there below,  
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,  
 Little breezes dusk and shiver  
 Thro' the wave that runs for ever  
 By the island in the river

Flowing down to Camelot.  
 Four grey walls, and four grey towers,  
 Overlook a space of flowers,  
 And the silent isle imbowers  
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,  
 Slide the heavy barges trail'd  
 By slow horses; and unhail'd  
 The shalllop fitteth silken-sail'd  
 Skimming down to Camelot;

But who hath seen her wave her hand? *Clement*  
 Or at the casement seen her stand?  
 Or is she known in all the land,  
 The Lady of Shalott? *Agincourt*  
*Island*

Only reapers, reaping early  
 In among the bearded barley,  
 Hear a song that echoes cheerly  
 From the river winding clearly,  
 Down to tower'd Camelot:  
 And by the moon the reaper weary,  
 Piling sheaves in uplands airy,  
 Listening, whispers 'Tis the fairy  
 Lady of Shalott.'

#### PART II

THERE she weaves by night and day  
 A magic web with colours gay.  
 She has heard a whisper say,  
 A curse is on her if she stay  
 To look down to Camelot.  
 She knows not what the curse may be,  
 And so she weaveth steadily,  
 And little other care hath she,  
 The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear  
 That hangs before her all the year,  
 Shadows of the world appear.  
 There she sees the highway near  
 Winding down to Camelot:  
 There the river eddy whirls,  
 And there the surly village-churls,  
 And the red cloaks of market girls,  
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,  
 An abbot on an ambling pad,  
 Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,  
 Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,  
 Goes by to tower'd Camelot;  
 And sometimes thro' the mirror blue  
 The knights come riding two and two:  
 She hath no loyal knight and true,  
 The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights  
 To weave the mirror's magic sights,  
 For often thro' the silent nights  
 A funeral, with plumes and lights,  
 And music, went to Camelot:  
 Or when the moon was overhead,  
 Came two young lovers lately wed;  
 'I am half sick of shadows,' said  
 The Lady of Shalott.

#### PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,  
 He rode between the barley-sheaves,  
 The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,  
 And flamed upon the brazen greaves  
 Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
 A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd  
 To a lady in his shield,  
 That sparkled on the yellow field  
 Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,  
Like to some branch of stars we see  
Hung in the golden Galaxy.

The bridle bells rang merrily  
As he rode down to Camelot:  
And from his blazon'd baldric slung  
A mighty silver bugle hung,  
And as he rode his armour rung,  
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather  
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,  
The helmet and the helmet-feather  
Burn'd like one burning flame together,  
As he rode down to Camelot.  
As often thro' the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;  
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;  
From underneath his helmet flow'd  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot.  
From the bank and from the river  
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,  
'Tirra lirra,' by the river  
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,  
She made three paces thro' the room,  
She saw the water-lily bloom,  
She saw the helmet and the plume,  
She look'd down to Camelot.  
Out flew the web and floated wide;  
The mirror crack'd from side to side;  
'The curse is come upon me,' cried  
The Lady of Shalott.

#### PART IV

IN the stormy east-wind straining,  
The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining,  
Heavily the low sky raining

Over tower'd Camelot;  
Down she came and found a boat  
Beneath a willow left afloat,  
And round about the prow she wrote

*The Lady of Shalott.*

And down the river's dim expanse—  
Like some bold seer in a trance,  
Seeing all his own mischance—  
With a glassy countenance  
Did she look to Camelot.  
And at the closing of the day  
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;  
The broad stream bore her far away,  
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white  
That loosely flew to left and right—  
The leaves upon her falling light—  
Thro' the noises of the night  
She floated down to Camelot:

And as the boat-head wound along  
The willowy hills and fields among,  
They heard her singing her last song,  
*The Lady of Shalott.*

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,  
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
Till her blood was frozen slowly,  
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,  
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.  
For ere she reach'd upon the tide  
The first house by the water-side,  
Singing in her song she died,  
*The Lady of Shalott.*

Under tower and balcony,  
By garden-wall and gallery,  
A gleaming shape she floated by,  
Dead-pale between the houses high,  
Silent into Camelot.  
Out upon the wharfs they came,  
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,  
And round the prow they read her name,  
*The Lady of Shalott.*

Who is this? and what is here?  
And in the lighted palace near  
Died the sound of royal cheer;  
And they cross'd themselves for fear,  
All the knights at Camelot:  
But Lancelot mused a little space;  
He said, 'She has a lovely face;  
God in his mercy lend her grace,  
*The Lady of Shalott.*'

#### OENONE

[1832.—Revised 1842]

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier  
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.  
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the  
glen,  
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine  
to pine,  
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand  
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway  
down  
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them  
roars  
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n  
ravine  
In cataract after cataract to the sea.  
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus  
Stands up and takes the morning: but in  
front  
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal  
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,  
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon  
Mournful Oenone, wandering forlorn  
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.  
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round  
her neck

Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.  
She, leaning on a fragment twined with  
vine,  
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade  
Sloped downward to her seat from the  
upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:  
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:  
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,  
Rests like a shadow, and the cicala sleeps.  
The purple flower droops: the golden bee  
Is lily-craddled: I alone awake.  
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,  
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,  
And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
Hear me O Earth, hear me O Hills, O  
Caves  
That house the cold crown'd snake! O  
mountain brooks,  
I am the daughter of a River-God,  
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all  
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls  
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,  
A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be  
That, while I speak of it, a little while  
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
I waited underneath the dawning hills,  
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,  
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:  
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,  
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd,  
white-hoofed,  
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft:  
Far up the solitary morning smote  
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes  
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star  
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard  
skin  
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny  
hair  
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's;  
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow  
brightens  
When the wind blows the foam, and all  
my heart  
Went forth to embrace him coming ere  
he came.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white  
palm  
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,

That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd  
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of  
speech  
Came down upon my heart.

"My own Oenone,  
Beautiful-brow'd Oenone, my own soul,  
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind  
ingrav'n  
'For the most fair,' would seem to award  
it thine,  
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt  
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace  
Of movement, and the charm of married  
brows."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,  
And added "This was cast upon the board,  
When all the full-faced presence of the  
Gods

Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon  
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere  
due:  
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,  
Delivering, that to me, by common voice  
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,  
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each  
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the  
cave

Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,  
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard  
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
It was the deep midnoon: one silvery  
cloud

Had lost his way between the piney sides  
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they  
came,  
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded  
bower,

And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,  
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,  
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,  
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,  
This way and that, in many a wild festoon  
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs  
With bunch and berry and flower thro'  
and thro'.

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,  
And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and  
lean'd

Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.  
Then first I heard the voice of her, to  
whom  
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that  
grows  
Larger and clearer, with one mind the  
Gods

Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made  
Proffer of royal power, ample rule  
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue

Wherewith to embellish state, "from many  
a vale  
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with  
corn,  
Or labour'd mines undrainable of ore.  
Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and  
toll,  
From many an inland town and haven  
large,  
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing  
citadel  
In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
Still she spake on and still she spake of  
power,  
"Which in all action is the end of all;  
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred  
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour  
crown's  
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand  
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon  
from me,  
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee  
king-born,  
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,  
Should come most welcome, seeing men,  
in power  
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd  
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats  
Above the thunder, with undying bliss  
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit  
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought  
of power  
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she  
stood  
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs  
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear  
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,  
The while, above, her full and earnest eye  
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek  
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

'"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign  
power.  
Yet not for power (power of herself  
Would come uncall'd for), but to live by  
law,  
Acting the law we live by without fear;  
And, because right is right, to follow right  
Were wisdom in the scorn of conse-  
quence."

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
Again she said: "I woo thee not with  
gifts.  
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me  
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,  
So shalt thou find me fairest."

Yet indeed,  
If gazing on divinity disrobed  
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,  
Unbiass'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure  
That I shall love thee well and cleave to  
thee,

So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,  
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,  
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,  
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow  
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown  
will,

Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,  
Commeasure perfect freedom."

'Here she ceased,  
And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, "O Paris,  
Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,  
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is  
me!

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,  
Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,  
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian  
wells,

With rosy slender fingers backward drew  
From her warm brows and bosom her deep  
hair

Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat  
And shoulder: from the violets her light  
foot

Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded  
form

Between the shadows of the vine-bunches  
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she  
moved.

'Dear mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,  
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh  
Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee  
The fairest and most loving wife in  
Greece,"

She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for  
fear:

But when I look'd, Paris had raised his  
arm,

And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,  
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,  
And I was left alone within the bower;  
And from that time to this I am alone,  
And I shall be alone until I die.

'Yet, mother Ida, hearken ere I die.  
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?  
My love hath told me so a thousand times.  
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,  
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,  
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail  
Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most lov-  
ing is she?

Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my  
arms

Were wound about thee, and my hot lips  
     prest  
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling  
    dew  
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains  
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,  
My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy  
    ledge

High over the blue gorge, and all between  
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract  
Foster'd the callow eaglet — from beneath  
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark  
    morn

The panther's roar came muffled, while I  
    sat

Low in the valley. Never, never more  
Shall lone Oenone see the morning mist  
Sweep thro' them; never see them over'aid  
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,  
Between the loud stream and the trembling  
    stars.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,  
Among the fragments tumbled from the  
    glens,

Or the dry thickets, I could meet with  
    her,

The Abominable, that uninvited came  
Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall,  
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,  
And bred this change; that I might speak  
    my mind,

And tell her to her face how much I hate  
Her presence, hated both of Gods and  
    men.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand  
    times;

In this green valley, under this green hi'l,  
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this  
    stone?

Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?  
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!  
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my  
    face?

O happy earth, how canst thou bear my  
    weight?

O death, death, death, thou ever-floating  
    cloud,

There are enough unhappy on this earth,  
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:  
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,  
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.  
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,  
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts  
Do shape themselves within me, more and  
    more,

Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear  
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost  
    hills,

Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see  
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother  
Conjectures of the features of her child  
Ere it is born: her child! — a shudder  
comes

Across me: never child be born of me,  
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.  
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,  
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to  
    me

Walking the cold and starless road of  
    Death

Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love  
With the Greek woman. I will rise and  
    go

Down into Troy, and ere the stars come  
    forth

Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she  
    says

A fire dances before her, and a sound  
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.  
What this may be I know not, but I  
    know

That, whereso'er I am by night and day,  
All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

### THE PALACE OF ART

[1832.—Revised 1842]

I BUILT my soul a lordly pleasure-house,  
    Wherein at ease for ay to dwell.  
I said, 'O Soul, make merry and carouse,  
    Dear soul, for all is well.'

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnish'd  
    brass,

I chose. The ranged ramparts bright  
From level meadow-bases of deep grass  
    Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf  
    The rock rose clear, or winding stair:  
My soul would live alone unto herself  
    In her high palace there.

And 'while the world runs round and  
    round,' I said,

'Reign thou apart, a quiet king,  
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast  
    shade  
Sleeps on his luminous ring.'

To which my soul made answer readily:  
    'Trust me, in bliss I shal' abide  
In this great mansion, that is built for me,  
    So royal-rich and wide.'

\* \* \* \*

Four courts I made, East, West and South  
and North,  
In each a squared lawn, wherefrom  
The golden gorge of dragons spouted  
forth  
A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran  
a row  
Of cloisters, branch'd like mighty woods,  
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow  
Of spouted fountain-floods.

And round the roofs a gilded gallery  
That lent broad verge to distant lands,  
Far as the wild swan wings, to where the  
sky  
Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one  
swell  
Across the mountain stream'd below  
In misty folds, that floating as they fell  
Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seem'd.  
To hang on tiptoe, tossing up  
A cloud of incense of all odour steam'd  
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, 'And who shall gaze  
upon  
My palace with unblinded eyes,  
While this great bow will waver in the sun,  
And that sweet incense rise?'

For that sweet incense rose and never  
fail'd,  
And, while day sank or mounted higher,  
The light aerial gallery, golden-rail'd,  
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stain'd and  
traced,  
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires  
From shadow'd grots of arches interlaced,  
And tipt with frost-like spires.

\* \* \* \*

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,  
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,  
Thro' which the livelong day my soul did  
pass,  
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace  
stood,  
All various, each a perfect whole  
From living Nature, fit for every mood  
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and  
blue,  
Showing a gaudy summer-morn,  
Where with puff'd cheek the belted hunter  
blew  
His wreathed bugle-horn.

*Review a great enjoyment*

One seem'd all dark and red — a tract of  
sand,  
And some one pacing there alone,  
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,  
Lit with a low large moon.

One show'd an iron coast and angry waves.  
You seem'd to hear them climb and fall  
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing  
caves,  
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow  
By herds upon an endless plain,  
The ragged rims of thunder brooding  
low,  
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.  
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind  
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,  
And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones  
and slags,  
Beyond, a line of heights, and higher  
All barr'd with long white cloud the scorn-  
ful crags,  
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home — grey twilight  
pour'd  
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,  
Softer than sleep — all things in order  
stored,  
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,  
As fit for every mood of mind,  
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was  
there,  
Not less than truth design'd.

\* \* \* \*

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,  
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,  
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx  
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,  
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
An angel look'd at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,  
A group of Houris bow'd to see  
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes  
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son  
In some fair space of sloping greens  
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,  
And watch'd by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,  
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw  
The wood-nymph, stay'd the Ausonian king  
to hear  
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrail'd,  
And many a tract of palm and rice,  
The throne of Indian Cama slowly sail'd  
A summer fann'd with spice.

Or sweet Europa's mantle blew unclasp'd,  
From off her shoulder backward borne;  
From one hand droop'd a crocus: one hand  
grasp'd  
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flush'd Ganymede, his rosy thigh  
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,  
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky  
Above the pillar'd town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair  
Which the supreme Caucasian mind  
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,  
Not less than life, design'd.

\* \* \* \*

Then in the towers I placed great bells  
that swung,  
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;  
And with choice paintings of wise men I  
hung  
The royal dais round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,  
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;  
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd  
his song,  
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest;  
A million wrinkles carved his skin;  
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,  
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set  
Many an arch high up did lift,  
And angels rising and descending met  
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely plann'd  
With cycles of the human tale.  
Of this wide world, the times of every  
land  
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,  
Toil'd onward, prick'd with goads and  
stings;

Here play'd, a tiger, rolling to and fro  
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or  
bind

All force in bonds that might endure,  
And here once more like some sick man  
declined,  
And trusted any cure:

But over these she trod: and those great  
bells

Began to chime. She took her throne:  
She sat betwixt the shining Oriels,  
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost Oriels' colour'd flame  
Two godlike faces gazed below;  
Plato the wise, and large-brow'd Verulam,  
The first of those who know.

And all those names, that in their motion  
were  
Full-welling fountain-heads of change,  
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazon'd  
fair

In diverse raiment strange:  
Thro' which the lights, rose, amber, emer-  
ald, blue,  
Flush'd in her temples and her eyes,  
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon,  
drew  
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong  
Her low preamble all alone,  
More than my soul to hear her echo'd song  
Throb thro' the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful  
mirth,  
Joying to feel herself alive,  
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible  
earth,

Lord of the senses five;  
Communing with herself: 'All these are  
mine,

And let the world have peace or wars,  
'Tis one to me.' She—when young night  
divine

Crown'd dying day with stars,  
Making sweet close of his delicious toils—  
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,  
And pure quintessences of precious oils  
In hollow'd moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and  
cried,

'I marvel if my still delight  
In this great house so royal-rich, and wide,  
Be flatter'd to the height.

'O all things fair to sate my various eyes!  
O shapes' and hues that please me well!  
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,  
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

'O God-like isolation which art mine,  
I can but count thee perfect gain,  
What time I watch the darkening droves  
of swine  
That range on yonder plain.

'In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,  
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;  
And oft some brainless devil enters in,  
And drives them to the deep.'

'Then of the moral instinct would she prate,  
And of the rising from the dead,'  
As hers by right of full-accomplish'd Fate;  
And at the last she said:

'I take possession of man's mind and deed.  
I care not what the sects may brawl.  
I sit as God holding no form of creed,  
But contemplating all.'

\* \* \* \*

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth  
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,  
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,  
And intellectual throne.

And so she threw and prosper'd: so three years

She prosper'd: on the fourth she fell,  
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,

Struck thro' with pangs of hell.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,  
God, before whom ever lie bare  
The abysmal deeps of Personality,  
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turn'd her sight,

The airy hand confusion wrought,  
Wrote 'Mene, mene,' and divided quite  
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude  
Fell on her, from which mood was born  
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood

Laughter at her self-scorn.

'What! is not this my place of strength,'  
she said,

'My spacious mansion built for me,  
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid

Since my first memory?'

But in dark corners of her palace stood  
Uncertain shapes; and unawares  
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,  
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,  
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,  
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,  
That stood against the wall.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light  
Or power of movement, seem'd my soul,  
'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite  
Making for one sure goal.

A still salt pool, lock'd in with bars of sand;

Left on the shore; that hears all night  
The plunging seas draw backward from  
the land  
Their moon-led waters white.

A star that with the choral starry dance  
Join'd not, but stood, and standing saw

The hollow orb of moving Circumstance  
Roll'd round by one fix'd law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curl'd.

'No voice,' she shriek'd in that lone hall,  
'No voice breaks thro' the stillness of this world:

One deep, deep silence all!'

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,

Inwapt tenfold in slothful shame,  
Lay there exiled from eternal God,  
Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,  
And nothing saw, for her despair,  
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,  
No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,  
And ever worse with growing time,  
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,  
And all alone in crime:

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round  
With blackness as a solid wall,  
Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound  
Of human footsteps fall.

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,

In doubt and great perplexity,  
A little before moon-rise hears the low Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound  
Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry  
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, 'I have found

A new land, but I die.'

She howl'd aloud, 'I am on fire within.  
There comes no murmur of reply.  
What is it that will take away my sin,  
And save me lest I die?'

So when four years were wholly finished,  
She threw her royal robes away.  
'Make me a cottage in the vale,' she said,  
'Where I may mourn and pray.'

'Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are

So lightly, beautifully built:  
Perchance I may return with others there  
When I have purged my guilt.'

### THE LOTOS-EATERS

[1832.—Revised 1842]

'COURAGE!' he said, and pointed toward the land.

'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'

In the afternoon they came unto a land  
In which it seemed always afternoon.

*expectation to give language  
feeling.*

*Mood of fatigue, & yearning  
for rest.*

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,  
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.  
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;  
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream  
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,  
Slow dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,  
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,  
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,  
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown  
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale  
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale  
And meadow, set with slender galangale;  
A land where all things always seem'd the same!  
And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
To each, but whoso did receive of them,  
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave  
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,  
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;  
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;  
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,  
Of child, and wife, and slave; but ever more

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.  
Then some one said, 'We will return no more,'

And all at once they sang, 'Our island home  
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.'

## CHORIC SONG

## I

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;  
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

## II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,  
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
While all things else have rest from weariness?  
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,  
We only toil, who are the first of things,  
And make perpetual moan,  
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:  
Nor ever fold our wings,  
And cease from wanderings,  
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;  
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,  
'There is no joy but calm!'  
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

## III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,  
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud  
With winds upon the branch, and there  
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,  
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon  
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow  
Falls, and floats adown the air.  
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,  
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,  
Drops in a silent autumn night.  
All its allotted length of days,  
The flower ripens in its place.  
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,  
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

## IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,  
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.  
Death is the end of life; ah, why  
Should life all labour be?

Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,  
And in a little while our lips are dumb.  
Let us alone. What is it that will last?  
All things are taken from us, and become  
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.  
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have  
To war with evil? Is there any peace  
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?  
All things have rest, and ripen toward the  
grave  
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:  
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or  
dreamful ease.

## v

How sweet it were, hearing the downward  
stream,  
With half-shut eyes ever to seem  
Falling asleep in a half-dream!  
To dream and dream, like yonder amber  
light,  
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on  
the height;  
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;  
Eating the Lotos day by day,  
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,  
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;  
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly  
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;  
To muse and brood and live again in memory,  
With those old faces of our infancy  
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,  
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an  
urn of brass!

## vi

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,  
And dear the last embraces of our wives  
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd  
change;  
For surely now our household hearths are  
cold:  
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:  
And we should come like ghosts to trouble  
joy.  
Or else the island princes over-bold  
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel  
sings  
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,  
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten  
things.  
Is there confusion in the little isle?  
Let what is broken so remain.  
The Gods are hard to reconcile:  
'Tis hard to settle order once again.  
There is confusion worse than death,  
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,  
Long labour unto aged breath,  
Sore tasks to hearts worn out with many  
wars  
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the  
pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,  
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing  
lowly)  
With half-dropt eyelids still,  
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,  
To watch the long bright river drawing  
slowly  
His waters from the purple hill —  
To hear the dewy echoes calling  
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined  
vine —  
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling  
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!  
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling  
brine,  
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

## VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:  
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:  
All day the wind breathes low with mel-  
lower tone:  
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone  
Round and round the spicy downs the yel-  
low Lotos-dust is blown.  
We have had enough of action, and of  
motion we,  
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when  
the surge was seething free,  
Where the wallowing monster spouted his  
foam-fountains in the sea.  
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an  
equal mind,  
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie  
reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of  
mankind.  
For they lie beside their nectar, and the  
bolts are hurl'd  
Far below them in the valleys, and the  
clouds are lightly curl'd  
Round their golden houses, girdled with  
the gleaming world:  
Where they smile in secret, looking over  
wasted lands,  
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,  
roaring deeps and fiery sands,  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and  
sinking ships, and praying hands.  
But they smile, they find a music centred in  
a doleful song  
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient  
tale of wrong,  
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words  
are strong;  
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that  
cleave the soil,  
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with  
enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and  
wine and oil;

Till they perish and they suffer—some,  
'tis whisper'd—down in hell  
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian  
valleys dwell,  
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of  
asphodel.  
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than  
toil, the shore  
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind  
and wave and oar;  
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not  
wander more.

## A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

[1832.—Revised 1842]

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,  
*'The Legend of Good Women,'* long ago  
Sung by the morning star 'of song, who  
made

His music heard below;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet  
breath  
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art  
Held me above the subject, as strong  
gales  
Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho' my  
heart,  
Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears. In  
every land  
I saw, wherever light illumineth,  
Beauty and anguish walking hand in hand  
The downward slope to death.

Those far-renowned brides of ancient song  
Peopled the hollow dark, like burning  
stars,  
And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and  
wrong,  
And trumpets blown for wars;

And clattering flints batter'd with clanging  
hoofs:  
And I saw crowds in column'd sanctu-  
aries;  
And forms that pass'd at windows and on  
roofs  
Of marble palaces;

Corpses across the threshold; heroes tall  
Dislodging pinnacle and parapet  
Upon the tortoise creeping to the wall;

Lances in ambush set;

And high shrine-doors burst thro' with  
heated blasts  
That run before the fluttering tongues of  
fire;

White surf wind-scatter'd over sails and  
masts,  
And ever climbing higher;  
Squadrons and squares of men in brazen  
plates,  
Scaffold, still sheets of water, divers  
woes,  
Ranges of glimmering vaults with iron  
grates,  
And hush'd seraglios.

So shape chased shape as swift as, when  
to land  
Bluster the winds, and tides the self-  
same way,  
Crisp foam-flakes scud along the level  
sand,  
Torn from the fringe of spray.

I started once, or seem'd to start in pain,  
Resolved on noble things, and strove to  
speak,  
As when a great thought strikes along the  
brain,  
And flushes all the cheek.

And once my arm was lifted to hew down  
A cavalier from off his saddle-bow,  
That bore a lady from a leaguer'd town;  
And then, I know not how,

All those sharp fancies, by down-lapsing  
thought  
Stream'd onward, lost their edges, and  
did creep  
Roll'd on each other, rounded, smooth'd,  
and brought  
Into the gulfs of sleep.

At last methought that I had wander'd far  
In an old wood: fresh-wash'd in coolest  
dew,  
The maiden splendours of the morning  
star  
Shook in the steadfast blue.

Enormous elm-tree-boles did stoop and lean  
Upon the dusky brushwood underneath  
Their broad curved branches, fledged with  
clearest green,  
New from its silken sheath.

The dim red morn had died, her journey  
done,  
And with dead lips smiled at the twilight  
plain,  
Half-fall'n across the threshold of the  
sun,  
Never to rise again.

There was no motion in the dumb dead  
air,  
Not any song of bird or sound of rill;  
Gross darkness of the inner sepulchre  
Is not so deadly still

As that wide forest. Growths of jasmine  
turn'd  
Their humid arms festooning tree to  
tree,  
And at the root thro' lush green grasses  
burn'd  
The red anemone.

I knew the flowers, I knew the leaves, I  
knew  
The tearful glimmer of the languid  
dawn  
On those long, rank, dark wood-walks  
drench'd in dew,  
Leading from lawn to lawn.

The smell of violets, hidden in the green,  
Pour'd back into my empty soul and  
frame  
The times when I remember to have been  
Joyful and free from blame.

And from within me a clear under-tone  
Thrill'd thro' mine ears in that unblissful  
clime,  
'Pass freely thro': the wood is all thine  
own,  
Until the end of time.'

At length I saw a lady within call,  
Stiller than chisell'd marble, standing  
there;  
A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,  
And most divinely fair.

Her loveliness with shame and with sur-  
prise  
Froze my swift speech: she turning on  
my face

The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes,  
Spoke slowly in her place.

'I had great beauty: ask thou not my name:  
No one can be more wise than destiny.  
Many drew swords and died. Where'er I  
came  
I brought calamity.'

'No marvel, sovereign lady: in fair field  
Myself for such a face had boldly died,'  
I answer'd free; and turning I appeal'd  
To one that stood beside.

But she, with sick and scornful looks  
averse,  
To her full height her stately stature  
draws;  
'My youth,' she said, 'was blasted with a  
curse:  
This woman was the cause.'

'I was cut off from hope in that sad place,  
Which yet to name my spirit loathes  
and fears:  
My father held his hand upon his face;  
I, blinded with my tears,

'Still strove to speak: my voice was thick  
with sighs  
As in a dream. Dimly I could descry  
The stern black-bearded kings with wolfish  
eyes,  
Waiting to see me die.

The high masts flicker'd as they lay afloat;  
The crowds, the temples, waver'd, and the  
shore;  
The bright death quiver'd at the victim's  
throat;  
Touch'd; and I knew no more.'

Whereto the other with a downward brow:  
'I would the white cold heavy-plunging  
foam,  
Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep  
below,  
Then when I left my home.'

Her slow full words sank thro' the silence  
drear,  
As thunder-drops fall on a sleeping sea:  
Sudden I heard a voice that cried, 'Come  
here,  
That I may look on thee.'

I turning saw, throned on a flowery rise,  
One sitting on a crimson scarf unroll'd;  
A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold  
black eyes,  
Brow-bound with burning gold.

She, flashing forth a haughty smile, began:  
'I govern'd men by change, and so I  
sway'd  
All moods. 'Tis long since I have seen a  
man.

Once, like the moon, I made

'The ever-shifting currents of the blood  
According to my humour ebb and flow.  
I have no men to govern in this wood:  
That makes my only woe.'

'Nay—yet it chafes me that I could not  
bend  
One will; nor tame and tutor with mine  
eye  
That dull cold-blooded Caesar. Prythee,  
friend,  
Where is Mark Antony?

'The man, my lover, with whom I rode  
sublime  
On Fortune's neck: we sat as God by  
God:  
The Nilus would have risen before his  
time  
And flooded at our nod.

'We drank the Libyan Sun to sleep, and  
lit  
Lamps which outburn'd Canopus. O my  
life  
In Egypt! O the dalliance and the wit,  
The flattery and the strife,

'And the wild kiss, when fresh from war's alarms,  
My Hercules, my Roman Antony,  
My mailed Bacchus leapt into my arms,  
Contented there to die!

'And there he died: and when I heard my name  
Sigh'd forth with life I would not brook  
my fear  
Of the other: with a worm I balk'd his fame.  
What else was left? look here!

(With that she tore her robe apart, and half  
The polish'd argent of her breast to sight  
Laid bare: Thereto she pointed with a laugh,  
Showing the aspick's bite.)

'I died a Queen. The Roman soldier found  
Me lying dead, my crown about my brows,  
A name for ever!—lying robed and crown'd,  
. Worthy a Roman spouse.'

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range  
Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance  
From tone to tone, and glided thro' all change  
Of liveliest utterance.

When she made pause I knew not for delight;  
Because with sudden motion from the ground  
She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with light  
The interval of sound.

Still with their fires Love tipt his keenest darts;  
As once they drew into two burning rings  
All beams of Love, melting the mighty hearts  
Of captains and of kings.

Slowly my sense undazzled. Then I heard  
A noise of some one coming thro' the lawn,  
And singing clearer than the crested bird,  
That claps his wings at dawn.

'The torrent brooks of hallow'd Israel  
From craggy hollows pouring, late and soon,  
Sound all night long, in falling thro' the dell,  
Far-heard beneath the moon.

'The balmy moon of blessed Israel  
Floods all the deep-blue gloom with beams divine:  
All night the splinter'd crags that wall the dell  
With spires of silver shine.'

As one that museth where broad sunshine laves  
The lawn by some cathedral, thro' the door  
Hearing the holy organ rolling waves  
Of sound on roof and floor

Within, and anthem sung, is charm'd and tied  
To where he stands,—so stood I, when that flow  
Of music left the lips of her that died  
To save her father's vow;

The daughter of the warrior Gi'eadite,  
A maiden pure; as when she went along  
From Mizpeh's tower'd gate with welcome light,  
With timbrel and with song.

My words leapt forth: 'Heaven heads the count of crimes  
With that wild oath.' She render'd answer high:  
'Not so, nor once alone; a thousand times  
I would be born and die.'

'Single I grew, like some green plant, whose root  
Creeps to the garden water-pipes beneath,  
Feeding the flower; but ere my flower to fruit  
Changed, I was ripe for death.

'My God, my land, my father—these did move  
Me from my bliss of life, that Nature gave,  
Lower'd softly with a threefold cord of love  
Down to a silent grave.

'And I went mourning, "No fair Hebrew boy  
Shall smile away my maiden blame among  
The Hebrew mothers"—emptied of all joy,  
Leaving the dance and song,

'Leaving the olive-gardens far below,  
Leaving the promise of my bridal bower,  
The valleys of grape-loaded vines that glow  
Beneath the battled tower.

'The light white cloud swam over us. Anon  
We heard the lion roaring from his den;  
We saw the large white stars rise one by  
one,  
Or, from the darken'd glen,

'Saw God divide the night with flying flame,  
And thunder on the everlasting hills.  
I heard Him, for He spake, and grief became  
A solemn scorn of ills.

'When the next moon was roll'd into the sky,  
Strength came to me that equalld my desire.  
How beautiful a thing it was to die  
For God and for my sire!

'It comforts me in this one thought to dwell,  
That I subdued me to my father's will;  
Because the kiss he gave me, ere I fell,  
Sweetens the spirit still.

'Moreover it is written that my race  
Hew'd Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer  
On Arnon unto Minneth.' Here her face  
Glow'd, as I look'd at her.

She lock'd her lips: she left me where I stood:  
'Glory to God,' she sang, and past afar,  
Thridding the sombre boskage of the wood,  
Toward the morning-star.

Losing her carol I stood pensively,  
As one that from a casement leans his head,  
When midnight bells cease ringing suddenly,  
And the old year is dead.

'Alas! alas!' a low voice, full of care,  
Murmur'd beside me: 'Turn and look on me:  
I am that Rosamond, whom men call fair,  
If what I was I be.

'Would I had been some maiden coarse and poor!  
O me, that I should ever see the light!  
Those dragon eyes of anger'd Eleanor  
Do hunt me, day and night.'

She ceased in tears, fallen from hope and trust:  
To whom the Egyptian: 'O, you tamely died!  
You should have clung to Fulvia's waist,  
and thrust  
The dagger thro' her side.'

With that sharp sound the white dawn's  
creeping beams,  
Stol'n to my brain, dissolved the mystery  
Of folded sleep. The captain of my dreams  
Ruled in the eastern sky.

Morn broaden'd on the borders of the dark,  
Ere I saw her, who clasp'd in her last  
trance  
Her murder'd father's head, or Joan of  
Arc,  
A light of ancient France;

Or her, who knew that Love can vanquish  
Death,  
Who kneeling, with one arm about her king,  
Drew forth the poison with her balmy  
breath,  
Sweet as new buds in Spring.

No memory labours longer from the deep  
Gold-mines of thought to lift the hidden ore  
That glimpses, moving up, than I from  
sleep  
To gather and tell o'er

Each little sound and sight. With what  
dull pain  
Compass'd, how eagerly I sought to strike  
Into that wondrous track of dreams again!  
But no two dreams are like.

As when a soul laments, which hath been  
blest,  
Desiring what is mingled with past years,  
In yearnings that can never be exprest  
By signs or groans or tears;

Because all words, tho' cull'd with choicest  
art,  
Failing to give the bitter of the sweet,  
Wither beneath the palate, and the heart  
Faints, faded by its heat.

#### TO J. S.

[1833]

THE wind, that beats the mountain, blows  
More softly round the open wold,  
And gently comes the world to those  
That are cast in gentle mould.

And me this knowledge bolder made,  
Or else I had not dared to flow  
In these words toward you, and invade  
Even with a verse your holy woe.

'Tis strange that those we lean on most,  
Those in whose laps our limbs are nursed,  
Fall into shadow, soonest lost:  
Those we love first are taken first.

God gives us love. Something to love  
He lends us; but, when love is grown  
To ripeness, that on which it throve  
Falls off, and love is left alone.

This is the curse of time. Alas!  
In grief I am not all unlearn'd;  
Once thro' mine own doors Death did pass;  
One went, who never hath return'd.

He will not smile—not speak to me  
Once more. Two years his chair is seen  
Empty before us. That was he  
Without whose life I had not been.

Your loss is rarer; for this star  
Rose with you thro' a little arc  
Of heaven, nor having wander'd far  
Shot on the sudden into dark.

I knew your brother: his mute dust  
I honour and his living worth:  
A man more pure and bold and just  
Was never born into the earth.

I have not look'd upon you nigh,  
Since that dear soul hath fall'n asleep.  
Great Nature is more wise than I:  
I will not tell you not to weep.

And tho' mine own eyes fill with dew,  
Drawn from the spirit thro' the brain,  
I will not even preach to you,  
'Weep, weeping dulls the inward pain.'

Let Grief be her own mistress still.  
She loveth her own anguish deep  
More than much pleasure. Let her will  
Be done—to weep or not to weep.

I will not say 'God's ordinance  
Of Death is blown in every wind,'  
For that is not a common chance  
That takes away a noble mind.

His memory long will live alone  
In all our hearts, as mournful light  
That broods above the fallen sun,  
And dwells in heaven half the night.

Vain solace! Memory standing near  
Cast down her eyes, and in her throat  
Her voice seem'd distant, and a tear  
Dropt on the letters as I wrote.

I wrote I know not what. In truth,  
How should I soothe you anyway,  
Who miss the brother of your youth?  
Yet something I did wish to say:

For he too was a friend to me:  
Both are my friends, and my true breast  
Bleedeth for both; yet it may be  
That only silence suiteth best.

Words weaker than your grief would make  
Grief more. 'Twere better I should  
cease;

Although myself could almost take  
The place of him that sleeps in peace.

Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace:  
Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul,  
While the stars burn, the moons increase,  
And the great ages onward roll.

Sleep till the end, true soul and sweet.  
Nothing comes to thee new or strange.  
Sleep full of rest from head to feet;  
Lie still, dry dust, secure of change.

### ST. AGNES' EVE

[1837]

DEEP on the convent-roof the snows  
Are sparkling to the moon:  
My breath to heaven like vapour goes:  
May my soul follow soon!  
The shadows of the convent-towers  
Slant down the snowy sward,  
Still creeping with the creeping hours  
That lead me to my Lord:  
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear  
As are the frosty skies,  
Or this first snowdrop of the year  
That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,  
To yonder shining ground;  
As this pale taper's earthly spark,  
To yonder argent round;  
So shows my soul before the Lamb,  
My spirit before Thee;  
So in mine earthly house I am,  
To that I hope to be.  
Break up the heavens, O Lord! and far,  
Thro' all yon starlight keen,  
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,  
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors;  
The flashes come and go;  
All heaven bursts her starry floors,  
And strows her lights below,  
And deepens on and up! the gates  
Roll back, and far within  
For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,  
To make me pure of sin.  
The sabbaths of Eternity,  
One sabbath deep and wide—  
A light upon the shining sea—  
The Bridegroom with his bride!

### YOU ASK ME, WHY, THO' ILL AT EASE

[Composed c. 1833.—Published 1842]

You ask me, why, tho' ill at ease,  
Within this region I subsist,  
Whose spirits falter in the mist,  
And languish for the purple seas.

It is the land that freemen till,  
That sober-suited Freedom chose,  
The land, where girt with friends or foes  
A man may speak the thing he will;

A land of settled government,  
A land of just and old renown,  
Where Freedom broadens slowly down  
From precedent to precedent:

Where faction seldom gathers head,  
But by degrees to fullness wrought,  
The strength of some diffusive thought  
Hath time and space to work and spread.

Should banded unions persecute  
Opinion, and induce a time  
When single thought is civil crime,  
And individual freedom mute;

Tho' Power should make from land to land  
The name of Britain trebly great—  
Tho' every channel of the State  
Should fill and choke with golden sand—

Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,  
Wild wind! I seek a warmer sky,  
And I will see before I die  
The palms and temples of the South.

#### OF OLD SAT FREEDOM ON THE HEIGHTS

[Composed c. 1833. — Published 1842]

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,  
The thunders breaking at her feet:  
Above her shook the starry lights:  
She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,  
Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,  
But, fragments of her mighty voice  
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro' town and field  
To mingle with the human race,  
And part by part to men reveal'd  
The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,  
From her isle-altar gazing down,  
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,  
And, King-like, wears the crown:

Her open eyes desire the truth.  
The wisdom of a thousand years  
Is in them. May perpetual youth  
Keep dry their light from tears;

That her fair form may stand and shine,  
Make bright our days and light our  
dreams,  
Turning to scorn with lips divine  
The falsehood of extremes!

#### LOVE THOU THY LAND, WITH LOVE FAR-BROUGHT

[Composed c. 1833. — Published 1842]

Love thou thy land, with love far-brought  
From out the storied Past, and used  
Within the Present, but transfused  
Thro' future time by power of thought.

True love turn'd round on fixed poles,  
Love, that endures not sordid ends,  
For English natures, freemen, friends,  
Thy brothers and immortal souls.

But pamper not a hasty time,  
Nor feed with crude imaginings  
The herd, wild hearts and feeble wings,  
That every sophister can lime.

Deliver not the tasks of might  
To weakness, neither hide the ray  
From those, not blind, who wait for day,  
Tho' sitting girt with doubtful light.

Make knowledge circle with the winds;  
But let her herald, Reverence, fly  
Before her to whatever sky  
Bear seed of men and growth of minds.

Watch what main-currents draw the years:  
Cut Prejudice against the grain:  
But gentle words are always gain:  
Regard the weakness of thy peers:

Nor toil for title, place, or touch  
Of pension, neither count on praise:  
It grows to guerdon after-days:  
Nor deal in watch-words overmuch;

Not clinging to some ancient saw;  
Not master'd by some modern term;  
Not swift nor slow to change, but firm:  
And in its season bring the law;

That from Discussion's lip may fall  
With Life, that, working strongly, binds—  
Set in all lights by many minds,  
To close the interests of all.

For Nature also, cold and warm,  
And moist and dry, devising long,  
Thro' many agents making strong,  
Matures the individual form.

Meet is it changes should control  
Our being, lest we rust in ease.  
We all are changed by still degrees,  
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free  
To ingroove itself with that which flies,  
And work, a joint of state, that plies  
Its office, moved with sympathy.

A saying, hard to shape in act;  
For all the past of Time reveals  
A bridal dawn of thunder-peals,  
Wherever Thought hath wedded Fact.

Ev'n now we hear with inward strife  
A motion toiling in the gloom—  
The Spirit of the years to come  
Yearning to mix himself with Life.

A slow-develop'd strength awaits  
Completion in a painful school;  
Phantoms of other forms of rule,  
New Majesties of mighty States—

The warders of the growing hour,  
But vague in vapour, hard to mark;  
And round them sea and air are dark  
With great contrivances of Power.

Of many changes, aptly join'd,  
Is bodied forth the second whole.  
Regard gradation, lest the soul  
Of Discord race the rising wind;

A wind to puff your idol-fires,  
And heap their ashes on the head;  
To shame the boast so often made,  
That we are wiser than our sires.

Oh yet, if Nature's evil star  
Drive men in manhood, as in youth,  
To follow flying steps of Truth  
Across the brazen bridge of war—

If New and Old, disastrous feud,  
Must ever shock, like armed foes,  
And this be true, till Time shall close,  
That Principles are rain'd in blood;

Not yet the wise of heart would cease  
To hold his hope thro' shame and guilt,  
But with his hand against the hilt,  
Would pace the troubled land, like Peace;

Not less, tho' dogs of Faction bay,  
Would serve his kind in deed and word,  
Certain, if knowledge bring the sword,  
That knowledge takes the sword away —

Would love the gleams of good that broke  
From either side, nor veil his eyes:  
And if some dreadful need should rise  
Would strike, and firmly, and one stroke:

To-morrow yet would reap to-day,  
As we bear blossom of the dead;  
Earn well the thrifty months, nor wed  
Raw Haste, half-sister to Delay.

ULYSSES *Closely signed*  
[1842] *Amherst*

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren  
craggs,  
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and  
dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know  
not me.

*Ulysses embodies the eternal  
craving for action & new experience.*

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd  
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with  
those

That loved me, and alone; on shore, and  
when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities of

men

And manners, climates, councils, govern-  
ments,

Mysel not least, but honour'd of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am a part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose mar-  
gin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unbrush'd, not to shine in use!  
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled  
on life

Were all too little, and of one to me  
Little remains: but every hour is saved  
From that eternal silence, something more,  
A bringer of new things; and vile it were  
For some three suns to store and hoard  
myself,

And this grey spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human  
thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,  
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil  
This labour, by slow prudence to make  
mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I  
mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her  
sail:

There gloom the dark broad seas. My  
mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and  
thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took  
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I  
are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
Death closes all: but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.  
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs:  
the deep  
Moans round with many voices. Come,  
my friends,  
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose  
holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.  
It may be that the gulfs will wash us  
down:  
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'  
We are not now that strength which in old  
days  
Moved earth and heaven; that which we  
are, we are;  
One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong  
in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

LOCKSLEY HALL  
[1842] *Locksley Hall*

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as  
yet 'tis early morn:  
Leave me here, and when you want me,  
sound upon the bugle-horn.  
'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old,  
the curlews call,  
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying  
over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance over-  
looks the sandy tracts,  
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into  
cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement,  
ere I went to rest,  
Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly  
to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising  
thro' the mellow shade,  
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in  
a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourish-  
ing a youth sublime  
With the fairy tales of science, and the  
long result of Time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruit-  
ful land repos'd;  
When I clung to all the present for the  
promise that it closed:

When I dipt into the future far as human  
eye could see;  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the  
wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon  
the robin's breast;  
In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets  
himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the  
burnish'd dove;  
In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly  
turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than  
should be for one so young,  
And her eyes on all my motions with a  
mute observance hung.

And I said, 'My cousin Amy, speak, and  
speak the truth to me,  
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my  
being sets to thee.'

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a  
colour and a light,  
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the  
northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with  
a sudden storm of sighs—  
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark  
of hazel eyes—

Saying, 'I have hid my feelings, fearing  
they should do me wrong,'  
Saying, 'Dost thou love me, cousin?' weep-  
ing, 'I have loved thee long.'

Love took up the glass of Time, and turn'd  
it in his glowing hands;  
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself  
in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote  
on all the chords with might;  
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling,  
pass'd in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we  
hear the copses ring,  
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with  
the fullness of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we  
watch the stately ships,  
And our spirits rush'd together at the  
touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy,  
mine no more!

O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the  
barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than  
all songs have sung,  
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to  
a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having  
known me—to decline

On a range of lower feelings and a nar-  
rower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his  
level day by day,  
What is fine within thee growing coarse to  
sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art  
mated with a clown,  
And the grossness of his nature will have  
weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall  
have spent its novel force,  
Something better than his dog, a little  
dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think  
not they are glazed with wine.  
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take  
his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain  
is overwrought:  
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch  
him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things  
to understand—  
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I  
slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from  
the heart's disgrace,  
Roll'd in one another's arms, and silent in  
a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against  
the strength of youth!  
Cursed be the social lies that warp us  
from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from  
honest Nature's rule!  
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straiten'd  
forehead of the fool!

Well — 'tis well that I should bluster! —  
Hadst thou less unworthy proved —  
Would to God — for I had loved thee  
more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which  
bears but bitter fruit?  
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my  
heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such  
length of years should come  
As the many-winter'd crow that leads the  
clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the rec-  
ords of the mind?  
Can I part her from herself, and love her,  
as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perish'd: sweetly did  
she speak and move:  
Such a one do I remember, whom to look  
at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her  
for the love she bore?  
No — she never loved me truly: love is  
love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this  
is truth the poet sings,  
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is re-  
membering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest  
thy heart be put to proof,  
In the dead unhappy night, and when the  
rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou  
art staring at the wall,  
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and  
the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, point-  
ing to his drunken sleep,  
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the  
tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whis-  
per'd by the phantom years,  
And a song from out the distance in the  
ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient  
kindness on thy pain.  
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow: get  
thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a  
tender voice will cry.  
'Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain  
thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down: my latest  
rival brings thee rest.  
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from  
the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a  
dearness not his due.  
Half is thine and half is his: it will be  
worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy  
petty part,  
With a little hoard of maxims preaching  
down a daughter's heart.

'They were dangerous guides the feelings  
— she herself was not exempt —  
Truly, she herself had suffer'd — Perish  
in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it — lower yet — be happy! where-  
fore should I care?  
I myself must mix with action, lest I  
wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, light-  
ing upon days like these?  
Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens  
but to golden keys.

Every gate is strung'd with suitors, all the markets overflow.

I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,  
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels,  
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.  
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,  
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,  
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field.

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,  
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,  
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:  
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,  
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew  
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,  
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd  
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumph'd ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,  
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;  
Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint:  
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point to point:

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,  
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,  
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat forever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,  
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,  
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,  
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moulder'd string?  
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness!  
woman's pleasure, woman's pain—  
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain:

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, match'd with mine,  
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine —

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat  
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat;

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starr'd;—  
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit — there to wander far away,  
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,  
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,  
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossom'd bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree —  
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,  
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramp'd no longer shall have scope and breathing-space;  
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinew'd, they shall dive, and they shall run,  
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,  
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books —

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I know my words are wild,  
But I count the grey barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,  
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage — what to me were sun or clime?

I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time —

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one.

Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range.

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day:

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age (for mine I knew not) help me as when life begun:  
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the Sun —

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.  
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!  
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,  
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunder-bolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;  
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

### SIR GALAHAD

[1842]

*medieval*

My good blade carves the casques of men,  
My tough lance thrusteth sure,  
My strength is as the strength of ten,  
Because my heart is pure.  
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,  
The hard brands shiver on the steel,  
The splinter'd spear-shafts crack and fly,  
The horse and rider reel:  
They reel, they roll in clangling lists,  
And when the tide of combat stands,  
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,  
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend  
On whom their favours fall!  
For them I battle till the end,  
To save from shame and thrall:  
But all my heart is drawn above,  
My knees are bow'd in crypt and shrine:  
I never felt the kiss of love,  
Nor maiden's hand in mine.  
More bounteous aspects on me beam,  
Me mightier transports move and thrill;  
So keep I fair thro' faith and prayer  
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,  
A light before me swims,  
Between dark stems the forest glows,  
I hear a noise of hymns;  
Then by some secret shrine I ride;  
I hear a voice, but none are there;  
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,  
The tapers burning fair.  
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,  
The silver vessels sparkle clean,  
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,  
And solemn chaunts resound between,

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres  
I find a magic bark;  
I leap on board: no helmsman steers:  
I float till all is dark.  
A gentle sound, an awful light!  
Three angels bear the holy Grail:  
With folded feet, in stoles of white,  
On sleeping wings they sail.  
Ah, blessed vision! blood of God!  
My spirit beats her mortal bars,  
As down dark tides the glory slides,  
And star-like mingles with the stars.

When on my goodly charger borne  
Thro' dreaming towns I go,  
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,  
The streets are dumb with snow.  
The tempest crackles on the leads,  
And, ringing, springs from brand and  
mail;

But o'er the dark a glory spreads,  
And gilds the driving hail.  
I leave the plain, I climb the height;  
No branchy thicket shelter yields;  
But blessed forms in whistling storms  
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given  
Such hope, I know not fear;  
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven  
That often meet me here.  
I muse on joy that will not cease,  
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,  
Pure lilies of eternal peace,  
Whose odours haunt my dreams;  
And, stricken by an angel's hand,  
This mortal armour that I wear,  
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,  
Are touch'd, are turn'd to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,  
And thro' the mountain-walls  
A rolling organ-harmony  
Swells up, and shakes and falls.  
Then move the trees, the copses nod,  
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:  
'O just and faithful knight of God!  
Ride on! the prize is near.'  
So pass I hostel, hall, and grange;  
By bridge and ford, by park and pale,  
All-arm'd I ride, whate'er betide,  
Until I find the holy Grail.

#### MOVE EASTWARD, HAPPY EARTH

[1842]

Move eastward, happy earth, and leave  
Yon orange sunset waning slow:  
From fringes of the faded eve,  
O, happy planet, eastward go;  
Till over thy dark shoulder glow  
Thy silver sister-world, and rise  
To glass herself in dewy eyes  
That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,  
Dip forward under starry light,  
And move me to my marriage-morn,  
And round again to happy night.

#### BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

[1842]

BREAK, break, break,  
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,  
That he shouts with his sister at play!  
O well for the sailor lad,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay!  
And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill;  
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!  
Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.

#### SONGS FROM THE PRINCESS

[1850]

As THRO' the land at eve we went,  
And pluck'd the ripen'd ears,  
We fell out, my wife and I,  
O we fell out I know not why,  
And kiss'd again with tears.  
And blessings on the falling out  
That all the more endears,  
When we fall out with those we love  
And kiss again with tears!  
For when we came where lies the child  
We lost in other years,  
There above the little grave,  
O there above the little grave,  
We kiss'd again with tears.

SWEET and low, sweet and low,  
Wind of the western sea,  
Low, low, breathe and blow,  
Wind of the western sea!  
Over the rolling waters go,  
Come from the dying moon, and blow,  
Blow him again to me;  
While my little one, while my pretty one,  
sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,  
Father will come to thee soon;  
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,  
Father will come to thee soon;  
Father will come to his babe in the nest,  
Silver sails all out of the west  
Under the silver moon:  
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one,  
sleep.

*pulling music*

THE splendour falls on castle walls  
And snowy summits old in story:  
The long light shakes across the lakes,  
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying,  
dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,  
And thinner, clearer, farther going!  
O sweet and far from cliff and scar  
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!  
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:  
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying,  
dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,  
They faint on hill or field or river:  
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,  
And grow for ever and for ever.  
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes  
flying,  
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying,  
dying.

*melancholy wail*  
TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they  
mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine de-  
spair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no  
more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a  
sail,  
That brings our friends up from the under-  
world,  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the  
verge;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no  
more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer  
dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering  
square;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no  
more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy  
feign'd  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;  
O Death in Life, the days that are no  
more.

*child*  
O SWALLOW, Swallow, flying, flying South,  
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,  
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest  
each,  
That bright and fierce and fickle is the  
South,  
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow,  
and light  
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,  
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,  
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart  
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with  
love,  
Delaying as the tender ash delays  
To clothe herself, when all the woods are  
green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is  
frown:  
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,  
But in the North long since my nest is  
made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,  
And brief the sun of summer in the North,  
And brief the moon of beauty in the  
South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,  
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make  
her mine,  
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

THY voice is heard thro' rolling drums,  
That beat to battle where he stands;  
Thy face across his fancy comes,  
And gives the battle to his hands:  
A moment, while the trumpets blow,  
He sees his brood about thy knee;  
The next, like fire he meets the foe,  
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

*child*  
HOME they brought her warrior dead:  
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:  
All her maidens, watching, said,  
'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,  
Call'd him worthy to be loved,  
Truest friend and noblest foe;  
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,  
Lightly to the warrior stept,  
Took the face-cloth from the face;  
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,  
Set his child upon her knee—  
Like summer tempest came her tears—  
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;  
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,  
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;  
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?  
    Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?

I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:  
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!

Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;

    Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd:

I strove against the stream and all in vain:

Let the great river take me to the main:  
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;

    Ask me no more.

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;

Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;  
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font:

The fire-fly wakens: waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,

And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,

And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves

A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,  
And slips into the bosom of the lake:  
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip  
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

'COME down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:

What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)

In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?

But cease to move so near the Heavens, and cease

To glide a sunbeam by the blasted Pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,

Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirited purple of the vats,  
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the silver horns,  
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven fangs  
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors:  
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down  
To find him in the valley; let the wild  
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave  
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,  
That like a broken purpose waste in air:  
So waste not thou; but come; for all the vales  
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth  
Arise to thee; the children call, and I  
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,  
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;  
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
And murmuring of innumerable bees.'

#### IN MEMORIAM

[1850]

#### IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

OBIIT MDCCXXXIII

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;  
Thou madest Life in man and brute;  
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot  
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:  
Thou madest man, he knows not why;  
He thinks he was not made to die;  
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, thou:  
Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;  
They have their day and cease to be:  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know;  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;  
We mock thee when we do not fear:  
But help thy foolish ones to bear;  
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me;  
What seem'd my worth since I began;  
For merit lives from man to man,  
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,  
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.  
I trust he lives in thee, and there  
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,  
Confusions of a wasted youth;  
Forgive them where they fail in truth,  
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

## I

I held it truth, with him who sings  
To one clear harp in divers tones,  
That men may rise on stepping-stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years  
And find in loss a gain to match?  
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch  
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,  
Let darkness keep her raven gloss:  
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,  
To dance with death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn  
The long result of love, and boast,  
'Behold the man that loved and lost,  
But all he was is overworn.'

## II

Old Yew, which graspest at the stones  
That name the under-lying dead,  
Thy fibres net the dreamless head,  
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,  
And bring the firstling to the flock;  
And in the dusk of thee, the clock  
Beats out the little lives of men.

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,  
Who changest not in any gale,  
Nor branding summer suns avail  
To touch thy thousand years of gloom:

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,  
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,  
I seem to fail from out my blood  
And grow incorporate into thee.

## III

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,  
O Priestess in the vaults of Death,  
O sweet and bitter in a breath,  
What whispers from thy lying lip?

'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run;  
A web is wov'n across the sky;  
From out waste places comes a cry,  
And murmurs from the dying sun:  
'And all the phantom, Nature, stands—  
With all the music in her tone,  
A hollow echo of my own,—  
A hollow form with empty hands.'

And shall I take a thing so blind,  
Embrace her as my natural good;  
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,  
Upon the threshold of the mind?

## IV

To Sleep I give my powers away;  
My will is bondsman to the dark;  
I sit within a helmless bark,  
And with my heart I muse and say:  
O heart, how fares it with thee now,  
That thou shouldst fail from thy desire,  
Who scarcely daarest to inquire,  
'What is it makes me beat so low?'

Something it is which thou hast lost,  
Some pleasure from thine early years.  
Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,  
That grief hath shaken into frost!

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross  
All night below the darken'd eyes;  
With morning wakes the will, and cries,  
'Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.'

## V

I sometimes hold it half a sin  
To put in words the grief I feel;  
For words, like Nature, half reveal  
And half conceal the Soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,  
A use in measured language lies;  
The sad mechanic exercise,  
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,  
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;  
But that large grief which these enfold  
Is given in outline and no more.

## VI

One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'  
That 'Loss is common to the race'—  
And common is the commonplace,  
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make  
My own less bitter, rather more:  
Too common! Never morning wore  
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,  
Who pledges now thy gallant son;  
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,  
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save  
Thy sailor,—while thy head is bow'd,  
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud  
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought  
At that last hour to please him well;  
Who mused on all I had to tell,  
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;  
And ever met him on his way  
With wishes, thinking, 'here to-day,'  
Or 'here to-morrow will he come.'

O somewhere, meek unconscious dove,  
That sittest ranging golden hair;  
And glad to find thyself so fair,  
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows  
In expectation of a guest;  
And thinking 'this will please him best,'  
She takes a riband or a rose;

For he will see them on to-night;  
And with the thought her colour burns;  
And, having left the glass, she turns  
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turn'd, the curse  
Had fallen, and her future Lord  
Was drown'd in passing thro' the ford,  
Or kill'd in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?  
And what to me remains of good?  
To her, perpetual maidenhood,  
And unto me no second friend.

## VII

Dark house, by which once more I stand  
Here in the long unlovely street,  
Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—  
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,  
And like a guilty thing I creep  
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away  
The noise of life begins again,  
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain  
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

## VIII

A happy lover who has come  
To look on her that loves him well,  
Who lights and rings the gateway bell,  
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light  
Dies off at once from bower and hall,  
And all the place is dark, and all  
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot  
In which we two were wont to meet,  
The field, the chamber and the street,  
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there  
In those deserted walks, may find  
A flower beat with rain and wind,  
Which once she foster'd up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,  
O my forsaken heart, with thee  
And this poor flower of poesy  
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanish'd eye,  
I go to plant it on his tomb,  
That if it can it there may bloom,  
Or dying, there at least may die.

## IX

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore  
Sailest the placid ocean-plains  
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,  
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn  
In vain; a favourable speed  
Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead  
Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex  
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright  
As our pure love, thro' early light  
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;  
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;  
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,  
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see  
Till all my widow'd race be run;  
Dear as the mother to the son,  
More than my brothers are to me.

## X

I hear the noise about thy keel;  
I hear the bell struck in the night;  
I see the cabin-window bright;  
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,  
And travell'd men from foreign lands;  
And letters unto trembling hands;  
And, thy dark freight, a vanish'd life.

So bring him: we have idle dreams:  
This look of quiet flatters thus  
Our home-bred fancies: O to us,  
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,  
That takes the sunshine and the rains,  
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains  
The chalice of the grapes of God;

Than if with thee the roaring wells  
Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine;  
And hands so often clasp'd in mine,  
Should toss with tangle and with shells.

## xi

Calm is the morn without a sound,  
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,  
And only thro' the faded leaf  
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,  
And on these dews that drench the furze,  
And all the silvery gossamers  
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain  
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,  
And crowded farms and lessening towers,  
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,  
These leaves that redder to the fall;  
And in my heart, if calm at all,  
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,  
And waves that sway themselves in rest,  
And dead calm in that noble breast  
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

## xii

Lo, as a dove when up she springs  
To bear thro' Heaven a tale of woe,  
Some dolorous message knit below  
The wild pulsation of her wings;

Like her I go; I cannot stay;  
I leave this mortal ark behind,  
A weight of nerves without a mind,  
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,  
And reach the glow of southern skies,  
And see the sails at distance rise,  
And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying; 'Comes he thus, my friend?  
Is this the end of all my care?'  
And circle moaning in the air:  
'Is this the end? Is this the end?'

And forward dart again, and play  
About the prow, and back return  
To where the body sits, and learn  
That I have been an hour away.

## xiii

Tears of the widower, when he sees  
A late-lost form that sleep reveals,  
And moves his doubtful arms, and feels  
Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss for ever new,  
A void where heart on heart reposed;  
And, where warm hands have prest and  
closed,

Silence, till I be silent too.

Which weep the comrade of my choice,  
An awful thought, a life removed,  
The human-hearted man I loved,  
A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come Time, and teach me, many years,  
I do not suffer in a dream;  
For now so strange do these things seem,  
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears;

My fancies time to rise on wing,  
And glance about the approaching sails,  
As tho' they brought but merchants' bales,  
And not the burthen that they bring.

## xiv

If one should bring me this report,  
That thou hadst touch'd the land to-day,  
And I went down unto the quay,  
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,  
Should see thy passengers in rank  
Come stepping lightly down the plank,  
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come  
The man I held as half-divine;  
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,  
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,  
And how my life had droop'd of late,  
And he should sorrow o'er my state  
And marvel what possess'd my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,  
No hint of death in all his frame,  
But found him all in all the same,  
I should not feel it to be strange.

## xv

To-night the winds begin to rise  
And roar from yonder dropping day:  
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,  
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,  
The cattle huddled on the lea;  
And wildly dash'd on tower and tree  
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver  
That all thy motions gently pass  
Athwart a plane of molten glass,  
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;  
And but for fear it is not so,  
The wild unrest that lives in woe  
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud.

That rises upward always higher,  
And onward drags a labouring breast,  
And topples round the dreary west,  
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

## XVI

What words are these have fall'n from me?  
Can calm despair and wild unrest  
Be tenants of a single breast,  
Or Sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take  
The touch of change in calm or storm;  
But knows no more of transient form  
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark  
Hung in the shadow of a heaven?  
Or has the shock, so harshly given,  
Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,  
And staggers blindly ere she sink?  
And stunn'd me from my power to think  
And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man  
Whose fancy fuses old and new,  
And flashes into false and true,  
And mingles all without a plan?

## XVII

Thou comest, much wept for: such a breeze  
Compell'd thy canvas, and my prayer  
Was as the whisper of an air  
To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move  
Thro' circles of the bounding sky,  
Week after week: the days go by:  
Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou may'st roam,  
My blessing, like a line of light,  
Is on the waters day and night,  
And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars  
Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark;  
And balmy drops in summer dark  
Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,  
Such precious relics brought by thee;  
The dust of him I shall not see  
Till all my widow'd race be run.

## XVIII

Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand  
Where he in English earth is laid,  
And from his ashes may be made  
The violet of his native land.

'Tis little; but it looks in truth  
As if the quiet bones were blest  
Among familiar names to rest  
And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head  
That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,  
And come, whatever loves to weep,  
And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,  
I, falling on his faithful heart,  
Would breathing thro' his lips impart  
The life that almost dies in me;

That dies not, but endures with pain,  
And slowly forms the firmer mind,  
Treasuring the look it cannot find,  
The words that are not heard again.

## XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave  
The darken'd heart that beat no more,  
They laid him by the pleasant shore,  
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;  
The salt sea-water passes by,  
And hushes half the babbling Wye,  
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,  
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,  
When, fill'd with tears that cannot fall,  
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again  
Is vocal in its wooded walls;  
My deeper anguish also falls,  
And I can speak a little then.

## XX

The lesser griefs that may be said,  
That breathe a thousand tender vows,  
Are but as servants in a house  
Where lies the master newly dead;

Who speak their feeling as it is,  
And weep the fulness from the mind:  
'It will be hard,' they say, 'to find  
Another service such as this.'

My lighter moods are like to these,  
That out of words a comfort win;  
But there are other griefs within,  
And tears that at their fountain freeze;

For by the hearth the children sit  
Cold in that atmosphere of death,  
And scarce endure to draw the breath,  
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,  
So much the vital spirits sink  
To see the vacant chair, and think,  
'How good! how kind! and he is gone.'

## XXI

I sing to him that rests below,  
And, since the grasses round me wave,  
I take the grasses of the grave,  
And make them pipes whereon to blow.  
  
The traveller hears me now and then,  
And sometimes harshly will he speak;  
'This fellow would make weakness weak,  
And melt the waxy hearts of men.'

Another answers, 'Let him be,  
He loves to make parade of pain,  
That with his piping he may gain  
The praise that comes to constancy.'

A third is wroth, 'Is this an hour  
For private sorrow's barren song,  
When more and more the people throng  
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

'A time to sicken and to swoon,  
When Science reaches forth her arms  
To feel from world to world, and charms  
Her secret from the latest moon?'

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:  
Ye never knew the sacred dust:  
I do but sing because I must,  
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,  
For now her little ones have ranged;  
And one is sad; her note is changed,  
Because her brood is stol'n away.

## XXII

The path by which we twain did go,  
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,  
Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,  
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

And we with singing cheer'd the way,  
And, crown'd with all the season lent,  
From April on to April went,

And glad at heart from May to May:

But where the path we walk'd began  
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,  
As we descended following Hope,  
There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,  
And spread his mantle dark and cold,  
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,  
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see  
Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,  
And think, that somewhere in the waste  
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

## XXIII

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,  
Or breaking into song by fits,  
Alone, alone, to where he sits,  
The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,  
I wander, often falling lame,  
And looking back to whence I came,  
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it  
ran  
Thro' lands where not a leaf was dumb;  
But all the lavish hills would hum  
The murmur of a happy Pan:

When each by turns was guide to each,  
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,  
And Thought leaped out to wed with  
Thought,  
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,  
And all was good that Time could bring,  
And all the secret of the Spring  
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy  
On Argive heights divinely sang,  
And round us all the thicket rang  
To many a flute of Arcady.

## XXIV

And was the day of my delight  
As pure and perfect as I say?  
The very source and fount of Day  
Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,  
This earth had been the Paradise  
It never look'd to human eyes  
Since Adam left his garden yet.

And is it that the haze of grief  
Makes former gladness loom so great?  
The lowness of the present state,  
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win  
A glory from its being far;  
And orb into the perfect star  
We saw not, when we moved therein?

## XXV

I know that this was Life,—the track  
Whereon with equal feet we fared;  
And then, as now, the day prepared  
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move  
As light as carrier-birds in air;  
I loved the weight I had to bear,  
Because it needed help of Love;

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,  
When mighty Love would cleave in twain  
The lading of a single pain,  
And part it, giving half to him.

## XXVI

Still onward winds the dreary way;  
I with it; for I long to prove  
No lapse of moons can canker Love,  
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt  
And goodness, and hath power to see  
Within the green the moulder'd tree,  
And towers fall'n as soon as built —

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee  
Or see (in Him is no before)  
In more of life true life no more  
And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn  
Breaks hither over Indian seas,  
That Shadow waiting with the keys,  
To shroud me from my proper scorn.

## XXVII

I envy not in any moods  
The captive void of noble rage,  
The linnet born within the cage,  
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes  
His license in the field of time,  
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,  
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,  
The heart that never plighted troth  
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;  
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;  
I feel it, when I sorrow most;  
'Tis better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.

## XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ:  
The moon is hid; the night is still;  
The Christmas bells from hill to hill  
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,  
From far and near, on mead and moor,  
Swell out and fail, as if a door  
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,  
That now dilate, and now decrease,  
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,  
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,  
I almost wish'd no more to wake,  
And that my hold on life would break  
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,  
For they controll'd me when a boy;  
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,  
The merry merry bells of Yule.

## XXIX

With such compelling cause to grieve  
As daily vexes household peace,  
And chains regret to his decease,  
How dare we keep our Christmas-eve;

Which brings no more a welcome guest  
To enrich the threshold of the night  
With shower'd largess of delight  
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs  
Entwine the cold baptismal font,  
Make one wreath more for Use and  
Wont,

That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,  
Gray nurses, loving nothing new;  
Why should they miss their yearly due  
Before their time? They too will die.

## XXX

With trembling fingers did we weave  
The holly round the Christmas hearth;  
A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,  
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall  
We gambol'd, making vain pretence  
Of gladness, with an awful sense  
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech:  
We heard them sweep the winter land;  
And in a circle hand-in-hand  
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang:  
We sung, tho' every eye was dim,  
A merry song we sang with him  
Last year: impetuously we sang:

We ceased: a gentler feeling crept  
Upon us: surely rest is meet:  
'They rest,' we said, 'their sleep is sweet,'  
And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;  
Once more we sang: 'They do not die  
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,  
Nor change to us, although they change;

Rapt from the fickle and the frail  
With gather'd power, yet the same,  
Pierces the keen seraphic flame  
From orb to orb, from veil to veil.'

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,  
Draw forth the cheerful day from night;  
O Father, touch the east, and light  
The light that shone when Hope was born.

## XXXI

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave,  
And home to Mary's house return'd,  
Was this demanded — if he yearn'd  
To hear her weeping by his grave?

'Where wert thou, brother, those four days?

There lives no record of reply,  
Which telling what it is to die  
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,  
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,  
A solemn gladness even crown'd  
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!  
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;  
He told it not; or something seal'd  
The lips of that Evangelist.

## XXXII

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,  
Nor other thought her mind admits  
But, he was dead, and there he sits,  
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede  
All other, when her ardent gaze  
Roves from the living brother's face,  
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,  
Borne down by gladness so complete,  
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet  
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful  
prayers,  
Whose loves in higher love endure;  
What souls possess themselves so pure,  
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

## XXXIII

O thou that after toil and storm  
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer air,  
Whose faith has centre everywhere,  
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays,  
Her early Heaven, her happy views;  
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse  
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,  
Her hands are quicker unto good:  
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood  
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe  
In holding by the law within,  
Thou fail not in a world of sin,  
And ev'n for want of such a type.

## XXXIV

My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live for evermore,  
Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,  
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks  
In some wild Poet, when he works  
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?  
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose  
Of things all mortal, or to use  
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,  
Like birds the charming serpent draws,  
To drop head-foremost in the jaws  
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

## XXXV

Yet if some voice that man could trust  
Should murmur from the narrow house,  
'The cheeks drop in; the body bows;  
Man dies: nor is there hope in dust.'

Might I not say? 'Yet even here,  
But for one hour, O Love, I strive  
To keep so sweet a thing alive'  
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,  
The sound of streams that swift or slow  
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow  
The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,  
'The sound of that forgetful shore  
Will change my sweetness more and  
more,  
Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put  
An idle case? If Death were seen  
At first as Death, Love had not been,  
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,  
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape  
Had bruised the herb and crush'd the  
grape,  
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

## XXXVI

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,  
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,  
We yield all blessing to the name  
Of Him that made them current coin;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
Where truth in closest words shall fail,  
When truth embodied in a tale  
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,  
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,  
And those wild eyes that watch the wave  
In roarings round the coral reef.

## XXXVII

Urania speaks with darken'd brow:  
'Thou protest here where thou art least;  
This faith has many a purer priest,  
And many an abler voice than thou.'

'Go down beside thy native rill,  
On thy Parnassus set thy feet,  
And hear thy laurel whisper sweet  
About the ledges of the hill.'

And my Melpomene replies,  
A touch of shame upon her cheek:  
'I am not worthy ev'n to speak  
Of thy prevailing mysteries;'

'For I am but an earthly Muse,  
And owning but a little art  
To lull with song an aching heart,  
And render human love his dues;

'But brooding on the dear one dead,  
And all he said of things divine,  
(And dear to me as sacred wine  
To dying lips is all he said),'

'I murmur'd, as I came along,  
Of comfort clasp'd in truth reveal'd;  
And loiter'd in the master's field,  
And darken'd sanctities with song.'

## XXXVIII

With weary steps I loiter on,  
Tho' always under al'd skies  
The purple from the distance dies,  
My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,  
The herald melodies of spring,  
But in the songs I love to sing  
A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here  
Survive in spirits render'd free,  
Then are these songs I sing of thee  
Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

## XXXIX

Old warden of these buried bones,  
And answering now my random stroke  
With fruitful cloud and living smoke,  
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,  
To thee too comes the golden hour  
When flower is feeling after flower;  
But Sorrow — fixt upon the dead.

And darkening the dark graves of men,  
What whisper'd from her lying lips?  
Thy gloom is kindled at the tops,  
And passes into gloom again.

## XL

Could we forget the widow'd hour  
And look on Spirits breathed away,  
As on a maiden in the day  
When first she wears her orange-flower!

When crown'd with blessing she doth rise  
To take her latest leave of home,  
And hopes and light regrets that come  
Make April of her tender eyes;

And doubtful joys the father move,  
And tears are on the mother's face,  
As parting with a long embrace  
She enters other realms of love;

Her office there to rear, to teach,  
Becoming as is meet and fit  
A link among the days, to knit  
The generations each with each;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given  
A life that bears immortal fruit  
In those great offices that suit  
The full-grown energies of heaven.

Ay me, the difference I discern!  
How often shall her old fireside  
Be cheer'd with tidings of the bride,  
How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,  
And bring her babe, and make her boast,  
Till even those that miss'd her most  
Shall count new things as dear as old:

But thou and I have shaken hands,  
Till growing winters lay me low;  
My paths are in the fields I know,  
And thine in undiscover'd lands.

## XLI

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss  
Did ever rise from high to higher;  
As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,  
As flies the lighter thro' the gross.

But thou art turn'd to something strange,  
And I have lost the links that bound  
Thy changes; here upon the ground,  
No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly! yet that this could be —  
That I could wing my will with might  
To leap the grades of life and light,  
And flash at once, my friend, to thee.

For tho' my nature rarely yields  
To that vague fear implied in death;  
Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,  
The howlings from forgotten fields;

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor  
An inner trouble I behold,  
A spectral doubt which makes me cold,  
That I shall be thy mate no more.

Tho' following with an upward mind  
The wonders that have come to thee,  
Thro' all the secular to-be,  
But evermore a life behind.

## XLII

I vex my heart with fancies dim:  
He still outstript me in the race;  
It was but unity of place  
That made me dream I rank'd with him.

And so may Place retain us still,  
And he the much-beloved again,  
A lord of large experience, train  
To riper growth the mind and will:

And what delights can equal those  
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,  
When one that loves but knows not,  
reaps  
A truth from one that loves and knows?

## XLIII

If Sleep and Death be truly one,  
And every spirit's folded bloom  
Thro' all its intervall gloom  
In some long trance should slumber on;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,  
Bare of the body, might it last,  
And silent traces of the past  
Be all the colour of the flower:

So then were nothing lost to man;  
So that still garden of the souls  
In many a figured leaf enrolls  
The total world since life began;

And love will last as pure and whole  
As when he loved me here in Time,  
And at the spiritual prime  
Rewaken with the dawning soul.

## XLIV

How fares it with the happy dead?  
For here the man is more and more;  
But he forgets the days before  
God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint,  
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense  
Gives out at times (he knows not  
whence)  
A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years  
(If Death so taste Lethean springs)  
May some dim touch of earthly things  
Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,  
O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;  
My guardian angel will speak out  
In that high place, and tell thee all,

## XLV

The baby new to earth and sky,  
What time his tender palm is prest  
Against the circle of the breast,  
Has never thought that 'this is I';

But as he grows he gathers much,  
And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'  
And finds 'I am not what I see,  
And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind  
From whence clear memory may begin,  
As thro' the frame that binds him in  
His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,  
Which else were fruitless of their due.  
Had man to learn himself anew  
Beyond the second birth of death.

## XLVI

We ranging down this lower track,  
The path we came by, thorn and flower,  
Is shadow'd by the growing hour,  
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last  
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,  
But clear from marge to marge shall  
bloom  
The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd;  
The fruitful hours of still increase;  
Days order'd in a wealthy peace,  
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,  
A bounded field, nor stretching far;  
Look also, Love, a brooding star,  
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

## XLVII

That each, who seems a separate whole,  
Should move his rounds, and fusing all  
The skirts of self again, should fall  
Reemerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:  
Eternal form shall still divide  
The eternal soul from all beside;  
And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,  
Enjoying each the other's good:  
What vaster dream can hit the mood  
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height  
Before the spirits fade away,  
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,  
'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'

## XLVIII

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,  
Were taken to be such as closed  
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,  
Then these were such as men might scorn:

Her care is not to part and prove;  
She takes, when harsher moods remit,  
What slender shade of doubt may fit,  
And makes it vassal unto love:

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,  
But better serves a wholesome law,  
And holds it sin and shame to draw  
The deepest measure from the chords:

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,  
But rather loosens from the lip  
Short swallow-flights of song, that dip  
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

## XLIX

From art, from nature, from the schools,  
Let random influences glance,  
Like light in many a shiver'd lance  
That breaks about the dappled pools:

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,  
The fancy's tenderest eddy wreath,  
The slightest air of song shall breathe  
To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,  
But blame not thou the winds that make  
The seeming-wanton ripple break,  
The tender-pencil'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears  
Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,  
Whose muffled motions blindly drown  
The bases of my life in tears.

## L

Be near me when my light is low,  
When the blood creeps, and the nerves  
prick  
And tingle; and the heart is sick,  
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame  
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;  
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,  
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,  
And men the flies of latter spring,  
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing,  
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,  
To point the term of human strife,  
And on the low dark verge of life  
The twilight of eternal day.

## LI

Do we indeed desire the dead  
Should still be near us at our side?  
Is there no baseness we would hide?  
No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,  
I had such reverence for his blame,  
See with clear eye some hidden shame  
And I be lessen'd in his love?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:  
Shall love be blamed for want of faith?  
There must be wisdom with great Death:  
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall:  
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours  
With larger other eyes than ours,  
To make allowance for us all.

## LII

I cannot love thee as I ought,  
For love reflects the thing beloved;  
My words are only words, and moved  
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

'Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,'  
The Spirit of true love replied;  
'Thou canst not move me from thy side,  
Nor human frailty do me wrong.'

'What keeps a spirit wholly true  
To that ideal which he bears?  
What record? not the sinless years  
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue:  
So fret not, like an idle girl,  
That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.  
Abide; thy wealth is gather'd in,  
When Time hath sunder'd shell from pearl.'

## LIII

How many a father have I seen,  
A sober man, among his boys,  
Whose youth was full of foolish noise,  
Who wears his manhood hale and green:

And dare we to this fancy give,  
That had the wild oat not been sown,  
The soil, left barren, scarce had grown  
The grain by which a man may live?

Or, if we held the doctrine sound  
For life outliving heats of youth,  
Yet who would preach it as a truth  
To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good: define it well:  
For fear divine Philosophy  
Should push beyond her mark, and be  
Procress to the Lords of Hell.

## LIV

Oh yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill,  
To pangs of nature, sins of will,  
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;  
That not one life shall be destroy'd,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;  
That not a moth with vain desire  
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,  
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last — far off — at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream: but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night:  
An infant crying for the light:  
And with no language but a cry.

## LV

The wish, that of the living whole  
No life may fail beyond the grave,  
Derives it not from what we have  
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,  
That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
So careful of the type she seems,  
So careless of the single life;

That I, considering everywhere  
Her secret meaning in her deeds,  
And finding that of fifty seeds  
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar-stairs  
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope.

## LVI

'So careful of the type?' but no.  
*small marks*  
From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone  
She cries 'A thousand types are gone:  
I care for nothing, all shall go.'

'Thou makest thine appeal to me:  
I bring to life, I bring to death:  
The spirit does but mean the breath:  
I know no more.' And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,  
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,  
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,  
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed  
And love Creation's final law —  
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed —

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,  
Who battled for the True, the Just,  
Be blown about the desert dust,  
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,  
A discord. Dragons of the prime,  
That tare each other in their slime,  
Were mellow music match'd with him.  
O life as futile, then, as frail!  
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!  
What hope of answer, or redress?  
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

## LVII

Peace; come away: the song of woe  
Is after all an earthly song:  
Peace; come away: we do him wrong  
To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;  
But half my life I leave behind:  
Methinks my friend is richly shrined;  
But I shall pass; my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,  
One set slow bell will seem to toll  
The passing of the sweetest soul  
That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,  
Eternal greetings to the dead;  
And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,  
'Adieu, adieu,' for evermore.

## LVIII

In those sad words I took farewell:  
Like echoes in sepulchral halls,  
As drop by drop the water falls  
In vaults and catacombs, they fell;  
And, falling, idly broke the peace  
Of hearts that beat from day to day,  
Half-conscious of their dying clay,  
And those cold crypts where they shall  
cease.

The high Muse answer'd: 'Wherefore grieve  
Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?  
Abide a little longer here,  
And thou shalt take a nobler leave.'

## LIX

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me  
No casual mistress, but a wife,  
My bosom-friend and half of life;  
As I confess it needs must be;

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,  
Be sometimes lovely like a bride,  
And put thy harsher moods aside,  
If thou wilt have me wise and good.

My centred passion cannot move,  
Nor will it lessen from to-day;  
But I'll have leave at times to play  
As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,  
With so much hope for years to come,  
That, howsoe'er I know thee, some  
Could hardly tell what name were thine.

## LX

He past; a soul of nobler tone:  
My spirit loved and loves him yet,  
Like some poor girl whose heart is set  
On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,  
She finds the baseness of her lot,  
Half jealous of she knows not what,  
And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn;  
She sighs amid her narrow days,  
Moving about the household ways,  
In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbours come and go,  
And tease her till the day draws by:  
At night she weeps, 'How vain am I!  
How should he love a thing so low?'

## LXI

If, in thy second state sublime,  
Thy ransom'd reason change replies  
With all the circle of the wise,  
The perfect flower of human time;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,  
How dimly character'd and slight,  
How dwarf'd a growth of cold and night,  
How blanch'd with darkness must I grow!

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,  
Where thy first form was made a man;  
I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can  
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

## LXII

Tho' if an eye that's downward cast  
Could make thee somewhat blench or  
fail,

Then be my love an idle tale,  
And fading legend of the past;

And thou, as one that once declined,  
When he was little more than boy,  
On some unworthy heart with joy,  
But lives to wed an equal mind;

And breathes a novel world, the while  
His other passion wholly dies,  
Or in the light of deeper eyes  
Is matter for a flying smile.

## LXIII

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,  
And love in which my hound has part,  
Can hang no weight upon my heart  
In its assumptions up to heaven;

And I am so much more than these  
As thou, perchance, art more than I,  
And yet I spare them sympathy,  
And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,  
As unto vaster motions bound,  
The circuits of thine orbit round  
A higher height, a deeper deep.

## LXIV

Dost thou look back on what hath been,  
As some divinely gifted man,  
Whose life in low estate began  
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,  
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,  
And breasts the blows of circumstance,  
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known  
And lives to clutch the golden keys,  
To mould a mighty state's decrees,  
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,  
Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope  
The pillar of a people's hope,  
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,  
When all his active powers are still,  
A distant dearness in the hill,  
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,  
While yet beside its vocal springs  
He play'd at counsellors and kings,  
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea  
And reaps the labour of his hands,  
Or in the furrow musing stands;  
'Does my old friend remember me?'

## LXV

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;  
I lull a fancy trouble-tost  
With 'Love's too precious to be lost,  
A little grain shall not be spilt.'

And in that solace can I sing,  
Till out of painful phases wrought  
There flutters up a happy thought,  
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing:

Since we deserved the name of friends,  
And thine effect so lives in me,  
A part of mine may live in thee  
And move thee on to noble ends.

## LXVI

You thought my heart too far diseased;  
You wonder when my fancies play  
To find me gay among the gay,  
Like one with any trifle pleased,

The shade by which my life was crost,  
Which makes a desert in the mind,  
Has made me kindly with my kind,  
And like to him whose sight is lost;

Whose feet are guided thro' the land,  
Whose jest among his friends is free,  
Who takes the children on his knee,  
And winds their curls about his hand:

He plays with threads, he beats his chair  
For pastime, dreaming of the sky;  
His inner day can never die,  
His night of loss is always there.

## LXVII

When on my bed the moonlight falls,  
I know that in thy place of rest  
By that broad water of the west,  
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,  
As slowly steals a silver flame  
Along the letters of thy name,  
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away;  
From off my bed the moonlight dies;  
And closing eaves of wearied eyes  
I sleep till dusk is dipt in grey:

And then I know the mist is drawn  
A lucid veil from coast to coast,  
And in the dark church like a ghost  
Thy tablet glimmers to the dawn.

## LXVIII

When in the down I sink my head,  
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my  
breath;  
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not  
Death,  
Nor can I dream of thee as dead:

I walk as ere I walk'd forlorn,  
When all our path was fresh with dew,  
And all the bugle breezes blew  
Reveillée to the breaking morn.

But what is this? I turn about,  
I find a trouble in thine eye,  
Which makes me sad I know not why,  
Nor can my dream resolve the doubt:

But ere the lark hath left the lea  
I wake, and I discern the truth;  
It is the trouble of my youth  
That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

## LXIX

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,  
That Nature's ancient power was lost:  
The streets were black with smoke and  
frost,  
They chatter'd trifles at the door:

I wander'd from the noisy town,  
I found a wood with thorny boughs:  
I took the thorns to bind my brows,  
I wore them like a civic crown:

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns  
From youth and babe and hoary hairs:  
They call'd me in the public squares  
The fool that wears a crown of thorns:

They call'd me fool, they call'd me child:  
I found an angel of the night;  
The voice was low, the look was bright;  
He look'd upon my crown and smiled:

He reach'd the glory of a hand,  
That seem'd to touch it into leaf:  
The voice was not the voice of grief,  
The words were hard to understand.

## LXX

I cannot see the features right,  
When on the gloom I strive to paint  
The face I know; the hues are faint  
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,  
A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,  
A hand that points, and paled shapes  
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning  
doors,  
And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;  
Dark bulks that tumble half alive,  
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will  
I hear a wizard music roll,  
And thro' a lattice on the soul  
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

## LXXI

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance  
And madness, thou hast forged at last  
A night-long Present of the Past  
In which we went thro' summer France.

Hadst thou such credit with the soul?  
Then bring an opiate trebly strong,  
Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong,  
That so my pleasure may be whole;

While now we talk as once we talk'd  
Of men and minds, the dust of change,  
The days that grow to something strange,  
In walking as of old we walk'd

Beside the river's wooded reach,  
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,  
The cataract flashing from the bridge,  
The breaker breaking on the beach.

## LXXII

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,  
And howlest, issuing out of night,  
With blasts that blow the poplar white,  
And lash with storm the streaming pane?

Day, when my crown'd estate begun  
 To pine in that reverse of doom,  
 Which sicken'd every living bloom,  
 And blurr'd the splendour of the sun;  
 Who usherest in the dolorous hour  
 With thy quick tears that make the rose  
 Pull sideways, and the daisy close  
 Her crimson fringes to the shower;  
 Who might'st have heaved a windless flame  
 Up the deep East, or, whispering, play'd  
 A chequer-work of beam and shade  
 Along the hills, yet look'd the same,  
 As wan, as chill, as wild as now;  
 Day, mark'd as with some hideous crime,  
 When the dark hand struck down thro'  
 time,  
 And cancell'd nature's best: but thou,  
 Lift as thou may'st thy burthen'd brows  
 Thro' clouds that drench the morning star,  
 And whirl the ungarner'd sheaf afar,  
 And sow the sky with flying boughs,  
 And up thy vault with roaring sound  
 Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day;  
 Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,  
 And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

## LXXIII

So many worlds, so much to do,  
 So little done, such things to be,  
 How know I what had need of thee,  
 For thou wert strong as thou wert true?  
 The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,  
 The head hath miss'd an earthly wreath:  
 I curse not nature, no, nor death;  
 For nothing is that errs from law.  
 We pass; the path that each man trod  
 Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:  
 What fame is left for human deeds  
 In endless age? It rests with God.  
 O hollow wraith of dying fame,  
 Fade wholly, while the soul exults,  
 And self-infolds the large results  
 Of force that would have forged a name.

## LXXIV

As sometimes in a dead man's face,  
 To those that watch it more and more,  
 A likeness, hardly seen before,  
 Comes out — to some one of his race:  
 So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,  
 I see thee what thou art, and know  
 Thy likeness to the wise below,  
 Thy kindred with the great of old.  
 But there is more than I can see,  
 And what I see I leave unsaid,  
 Nor speak it, knowing Death has made  
 His darkness beautiful with thee.

## LXXV

I leave thy praises unexpress'd  
 In verse that brings myself relief,  
 And by the measure of my grief  
 I leave thy greatness to be guess'd;  
 What practice howsoe'er expert  
 In fitting aptest words to things,  
 Or voice the richest-toned that sings,  
 Hath power to give thee as thou wert?  
 I care not in these fading days  
 To raise a cry that lasts not long,  
 And round thee with the breeze of song  
 To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perish'd in the green,  
 And, while we breathe beneath the sun,  
 The world which credits what is done  
 Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame;  
 But somewhere, out of human view,  
 Whate'er thy hands are set to do  
 Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

## LXXVI

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,  
 And in a moment set thy face  
 Where all the starry heavens of space  
 Are sharpen'd to a needle's end;

Take wings of foresight; lighten thro'  
 The secular abyss to come,  
 And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb  
 Before the moulderling of a yew;

And if the matin songs, that woke  
 The darkness of our planet, last,  
 Thine own shall wither in the vast,  
 Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy  
 bowers  
 With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain;  
 And what are they when these remain  
 The ruin'd shells of hollow towers?

## LXXVII

What hope is here for modern rhyme  
 To him who turns a musing eye  
 On songs, and deeds, and lives, that lie  
 Foreshorten'd in the tract of time?

These mortal lullabies of pain  
 May bind a book, may line a box,  
 May serve to curl a maiden's locks;  
 Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,  
 And, passing, turn the page that tells  
 A grief, then changed to something else,  
 Sung by a long-forgotten mind.

But what of that? My darken'd ways  
 Shall ring with music all the same;  
 To breathe my loss is more than fame,  
 To utter love more sweet than praise.

## LXXVIII

Again at Christmas did we weave  
The holly round the Christmas hearth;  
The silent snow possess'd the earth,  
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve:

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,  
No wing of wind the region swept,  
But over all things brooding slept  
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,  
Again our ancient games had place,  
The mimic picture's breathing grace,  
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who show'd a token of distress?  
No single tear, no mark of pain:  
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?  
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!  
No — mixt with all this mystic frame,  
Her deep relations are the same,  
But with long use her tears are dry.

## LXXIX

'More than my brothers are to me,' —  
Let this not vex thee, noble heart!  
I know thee of what force thou art  
To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,  
As moulded like in Nature's mint;  
And hill and wood and field did print  
The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd  
Thro' all his eddying coves; the same  
All winds that roam the twilight came  
In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,  
One lesson from one book we learn'd,  
Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd  
To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,  
But he was rich where I was poor,  
And he supplied my want the more  
As his unlikeness fitted mine.

## LXXX

If any vague desire should rise,  
That holy Death ere Arthur died  
Had moved me kindly from his side,  
And dropt the dust on tearless eyes;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,  
The grief my loss in him had wrought,  
A grief as deep as life or thought,  
But stay'd in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain;  
I hear the sentence that he speaks;  
He bears the burthen of the weeks,  
But turns his burthen into gain.

*1 Christmas with 3<sup>3</sup>*

His credit thus shall set me free;  
And, influence-rich to soothe and save,  
Unused example from the grave  
Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

## LXXXI

Could I have said while he was here,  
'My love shall now no further range;  
There cannot come a mellower change,  
For now is love mature in ear.'

Love, then, had hope of richer store:  
What end is here to my complaint?  
This haunting whisper makes me faint,  
'More years had made me love thee more.'

But Death returns an answer sweet:  
'My sudden frost was sudden gain,  
And gave all ripeness to the grain,  
It might have drawn from after-heat.'

## LXXXII

I wage not any feud with Death  
For changes wrought on form and face;  
No lower life that earth's embrace  
May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,  
From state to state the spirit walks;  
And these are but the shatter'd stalks,  
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare  
The use of virtue out of earth:  
I know transplanted human worth  
Will bloom to profit, elsewhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak  
The wrath that garners in my heart;  
He put our lives so far apart  
We cannot hear each other speak.

## LXXXIII

Dip down upon the northern shore,  
O sweet new-year delaying long;  
Thou doest expectant nature wrong;  
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,  
Thy sweetness from its proper place?  
Can trouble live with April days,  
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,  
The little speedwell's darling blue,  
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,  
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,  
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,  
That longs to burst a frozen bud  
And flood a fresher throat with song.

## LXXXIV

When I contemplate all alone  
The life that had been thine below,  
And fix my thoughts on all the glow  
To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crown'd with good,  
A central warmth diffusing bliss  
In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,  
On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;  
For now the day was drawing on,  
When thou should'st link thy life with  
one

Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled 'Uncle' on my knee;  
But that remorseless iron hour  
Made cypress of her orange flower,  
Despair of Hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,  
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.  
I see their unborn faces shine  
Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honour'd guest,  
Thy partner in the flowery walk  
Of letters, genial table-talk,  
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labour fills  
The lips of men with honest praise,  
And sun by sun the happy days  
Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;  
And all the train of bounteous hours  
Conduct by paths of growing powers,  
To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,  
Her lavish mission richly wrought,  
Leaving great legacies of thought,  
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,  
As link'd with thine in love and fate,  
And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait  
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,  
And He that died in Holy Land  
Would reach us' out the shining hand,  
And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?  
Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake  
The old bitterness again, and break  
The low beginnings of content.

## LXXXV

This truth came borne with bier and pall,  
I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,  
'Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all—

O true in word, and tried in deed,  
Demanding, so to bring relief  
To this which is our common grief,  
What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above  
Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;  
And whether love for him have drain'd  
My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws  
A faithful answer from the breast,  
Thro' light reproaches, half exprest,  
And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,  
Till on mine ear this message falls,  
That in Vienna's fatal walls  
God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair  
That range above our mortal state,  
In circle round the blessed gate,  
Received and gave him welcome there;

And led him thro' the blissful climes,  
And show'd him in the fountain fresh  
All knowledge that the sons of flesh  
Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,  
Whose life, whose thoughts were little  
worth,  
To wander on a darken'd earth,  
Where all things round me breathed of  
him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,  
O heart, with kindest motion warm,  
O sacred essence, other form,  
O solemn ghost, O crowned soul!

Yet none could better know than I,  
How much of act at human hands  
The sense of human will demands  
By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,  
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,  
His being working in mine own,  
The footsteps of his life in mine;

A life that all the Muses deck'd  
With gifts of grace, that might express  
All-comprehensive tenderness,  
All-subtilising intellect:

And so my passion hath not swerved  
To works of weakness, but I find  
An image comforting the mind,  
And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,  
That loved to handle spiritual strife,  
Diffused the shock thro' all my life,  
But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again  
For other friends that once I met;  
Nor can it suit me to forget  
The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love: I count it crime  
To mourn for any overmuch;  
I, the divided half of such  
A friendship as had master'd Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is  
Eternal, separate from fears:  
The all-assuming months and years  
Can take no part away from this:

But Summer on the steaming floods,  
And Spring that swells the narrow brooks,  
And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,  
That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave  
Recalls, in change of light or gloom,  
My old affection of the tomb,  
And my prime passion in the grave:

My old affection of the tomb,  
A part of stillness, yearns to speak:  
'Arise, and get thee forth and seek  
A friendship for the years to come,

'I watch thee from the quiet shore;  
Thy spirit up to mine can reach;  
But in dear words of human speech  
We two communicate no more.'

And I, 'Can clouds of nature stain  
The starry clearness of the free?  
How is it? Canst thou feel for me  
Some painless sympathy with pain?'

And lightly does the whisper fall;  
'Tis hard for thee to fathom this;  
I triumph in conclusive bliss,  
And that serene result of all.'

So hold I commerce with the dead;  
Or so methinks the dead would say;  
Or so shall grief with symbols play,  
And pining life be fancy-fed.

Now looking to some settled end,  
That these things pass, and I shall prove  
A meeting somewhere, love with love,  
I crave your pardon, O my friend;

If not so fresh, with love as true,  
I, clasping brother-hands, aver  
I could not, if I would, transfer  
The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart  
The promise of the golden hours?  
First love, first friendship, equal powers,  
That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,  
That beats within a lonely place,  
That yet remembers his embrace,  
But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, tho' widow'd, may not rest  
Quite in the love of what is gone,  
But seeks to beat in time with one  
That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,  
Knowing the primrose yet is dear,  
The primrose of the later year,  
As not unlike to that of Spring.

## LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,  
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom  
Of evening over brake and bloom  
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below  
Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,  
And shadowing down the horned flood  
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh  
The full new life that feeds thy breath  
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and  
Death,  
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas  
On leagues of odour streaming far,  
To where in yonder orient star  
A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

## LXXXVII

*Reminiscences of  
Opates*

I past beside the reverend walls  
In which of old I wore the gown;  
I roved at random thro' the town,  
And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes  
The storm their high-built organs make,  
And thunder-music, rolling, shake  
The prophets blazon'd on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,  
The measured pulse of racing oars  
Among the willows; paced the shores  
And many a bridge, and all about

The same grey flats again, and felt  
The same, but not the same; and last  
Up that long walk of limes I past  
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door:  
I linger'd; all within was noise  
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys  
That crash'd the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band  
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,  
And labour, and the changing mart,  
And all the framework of the land;

When one would aim an arrow fair,  
But send it slackly from the string;  
And one would pierce an outer ring,  
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master-bowman, he,  
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear  
We lent him. Who, but hung to hear  
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and grace  
And music in the bounds of law,  
To those conclusions when we saw  
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow  
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;  
And over those ethereal eyes  
The bar of Michael Angelo.

## LXXXVIII

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,  
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,  
O tell me where the senses mix,  
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ  
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,  
And in the midmost heart of grief  
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

And I — my harp would prelude woe —  
I cannot all command the strings;  
The glory of the sum of things  
Will flash along the chords and go.

## LXXXIX

Witch-elms that counterchange the floor  
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;  
And thou, with all thy breadth and height  
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

How often, hither wandering down,  
My Arthur found your shadows fair,  
And shook to all the liberal air  
The dust and din and steam of town:

He brought an eye for all he saw;  
He mixt in all our simple sports;  
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts  
And dusty purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,  
Immantled in ambrosial dark,  
To drink the cooler air, and mark  
The landscape winking thro' the heat:

O sound to rout the brood of cares,  
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,  
The gust that round the garden flew,  
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn  
About him, heart and ear were fed  
To hear him, as he lay and read  
The Tuscan poets on the lawn:

Or in the all-golden afternoon  
A guest, or happy sister, sung,  
Or here she brought the harp and flung  
A ballad to the brightening moon:

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,  
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,  
And break the livelong summer day  
With banquet in the distant woods;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme,  
Discuss'd the books to love or hate,  
Or touch'd the changes of the state,  
Or threaded some Socratic dream;

But if I praised the busy town,  
He loved to rail against it still,  
For 'ground in yonder social mill  
We rub each other's angles down,

'And merge' he said 'in form and gloss  
The picturesque of man and man.'  
We talk'd: the stream beneath us ran,  
The wine-flask lying couch'd in moss,

Or cool'd within the glooming wave;  
And last, returning from afar,  
Before the crimson-circled star  
Had fall'n into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,  
We heard behind the woodbine veil  
The milk that bubbled in the pail,  
And buzzings of the honied hours.

## xc

He tasted love with half his mind,  
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring  
Where nighest heaven, who first could  
sing  
This bitter seed among mankind;

That could the dead, whose dying eyes  
Were closed with wail, resume their life,  
They would but find in child and wife  
An iron welcome when they rise:

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,  
To pledge them with a kindly tear,  
To talk them o'er, to wish them here,  
To count their memories half divine;

But if they came who past away,  
Behold their brides in other hands;  
The hard heir strides about their lands,  
And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, tho' their sons were none of these,  
Not less the yet-loved sire would make  
Confusion worse than death, and shake  
The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me:  
Whatever change the years have wrought,  
I find not yet one lonely thought  
That cries against my wish for thee.

## XCI

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,  
And rarely pipes the mounted thrush;  
Or underneath the barren bush  
Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know  
Thy spirit in time among thy peers;  
The hope of unaccomplish'd years  
Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change  
May breathe, with many roses sweet,  
Upon the thousand waves of wheat,  
That ripple round the lonely grange;

Come: not in watches of the night,  
But where the sunbeam broodeth warm,  
Come, beauteous in thine after form,  
And like a finer light in light.

## XCII

If any vision should reveal  
Thy likeness, I might count it vain  
As but the canker of the brain;  
Yea, tho' it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast  
Together in the days behind,  
I might but say, I hear a wind  
Of memory murmuring the past.

Yea, tho' it spake and bared to view  
A fact within the coming year;  
And tho' the months, revolving near,  
Should prove the phantom-warning true,

They might not seem thy prophecies,  
But spiritual presentiments,  
And such refraction of events  
As often rises ere they rise.

## XCIII

I shall not see thee. Dare I say  
No spirit ever brake the band.  
That stays him from the native land,  
Where first he walk'd when claspt in clay?

No visual shade of some one lost,  
But he, the Spirit himself, may come  
Where all the nerve of sense is numb;  
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from thy sightless range  
With gods in unconjectured bliss,  
O, from the distance of the abyss  
Of tenfold-complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear  
The wish too strong for words to name;  
That in this blindness of the frame  
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

## XCIV

How pure at heart and sound in head,  
With what divine affections bold  
Should be the man whose thought would  
hold  
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call  
The spirits from their golden day,  
Except, like them, thou too canst say,  
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,  
Imaginations calm and fair,  
The memory like a cloudless air,  
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,  
And doubt beside the portal waits,  
They can but listen at the gates,  
And hear the household jar within.

## XCV

By night we linger'd on the lawn,  
For underfoot the herb was dry;  
And genial warmth; and o'er the sky  
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn  
Unwavering: not a cricket chirr'd:  
The brook alone far-off was heard,  
And on the board the fluttering urn:

And bats went round in fragrant skies,  
And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes  
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes  
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd  
From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd at  
ease,  
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees  
Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,  
Withdrew themselves from me and night,  
And in the house light after light  
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read  
Of that glad year which once had been,  
In those fall'n leaves which kept their  
green,  
The noble letters of the dead:

And strangely on the silence broke  
The silent-speaking words, and strange  
Was love's dumb cry defying change  
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell  
On doubts that drive the coward back,  
And keen thro' wordy snares to track  
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,  
The dead man touch'd me from the past,  
And all at once it seem'd at last  
His living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in his was wound, and whirl'd  
About empyreal heights of thought,  
And came on that which is, and caught  
The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out  
The steps of Time—the shocks of  
Chance—  
The blows of Death. At length my  
trance

Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.  
Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame  
In matter-moulded forms of speech,  
Or ev'n for intellect to reach  
Thro' memory that which I became:

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd  
The knolls once more where, couch'd at  
ease,  
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees  
Laid their dark arms about the field:

And suck'd from out the distant gloom  
A breeze began to tremble o'er  
The large leaves of the sycamore,  
And fluctuate all the still perfume,  
And gathering freshlier overhead,  
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung  
The heavy-folded rose, and flung  
The lilies to and fro, and said

'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away;  
And East and West, without a breath,  
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,  
To broaden into boundless day.

## xcvi

You say, but with no touch of scorn,  
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes  
Are tender over drowning flies,  
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew  
In many a subtle question versed,  
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,  
But ever strove to make it true:

Perplex'd in faith, but pure in deeds,  
At last he beat his music out.  
There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,  
He would not make his judgment blind,  
He faced the spectres of the mind  
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;  
And Power was with him in the night,  
Which makes the darkness and the light,  
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,  
As over Sinai's peaks of old,  
While Israel made their gods of gold,  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

## xcvii

My love has talk'd with rocks and trees;  
He finds on misty mountain-ground  
His own vast shadow glory-crown'd;  
He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life—  
I look'd on these and thought of thee  
In vastness and in mystery,  
And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two—they dwelt with eye on eye,  
Their hearts of old have beat in tune,  
Their meetings made December June,  
Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never past away;  
The days she never can forget  
Are earnest that he loves her yet,  
Whate'er the faithless people say.

Her life is lone, he sits apart,  
He loves her yet, she will not weep,  
Tho' rapt in matters dark and deep  
He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,  
He reads the secret of the star,  
He seems so near and yet so far,  
He looks so cold: she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,  
A wither'd violet is her bliss:  
She knows not what his greatness is,  
For that, for all, she loves him more.

For him she plays, to him she sings  
Of early faith and plighted vows;  
She knows but matters of the house,  
And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fixt and cannot move,  
She darkly feels him great and wise,  
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,  
'I cannot understand: I love.'

## xcviii

You leave us; you will see the Rhine,  
And those fair hills I sail'd below,  
When I was there with him; and go  
By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,  
That City. All her splendour seems  
No livelier than the wisp that gleams  
On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair  
Enwind her isles, unmark'd of me;  
I have not seen, I will not see  
Vienna; rather dream that there,

A treble darkness, Evil haunts  
The birth, the bridal; friend from friend  
Is oftener parted, fathers bend  
Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey  
By each cold hearth, and sadness flings  
Her shadow on the blaze of kings:  
And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town  
With statelier progress to and fro  
The double tides of chariots flow  
By park and suburb under brown

Of lustier leaves; nor more content,  
He told me, lives in any crowd,  
When all is gay with lamps, and loud  
With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain;  
And wheels the circled dance, and breaks  
The rocket molten into flakes  
Of crimson or in emerald rain.

## XCIX

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,  
So loud with voices of the birds,  
So thick with lownings of the herds,  
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red  
On yon swol'n brook that bubbles fast  
By meadows breathing of the past,  
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves  
A song that slighted the coming care,  
And Autumn laying here and there  
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath  
To myriads on the genial earth,  
Memories of bridal, or of birth,  
And unto myriads more, of death.

O wheresoever those may be,  
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,  
To-day they count as kindred souls;  
They know me not, but mourn with me.

## C.

I climb the hill: from end to end  
Of all the landscape underneath,  
I find no place that does not breathe  
Some gracious memory of my friend;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,  
Or low morass and whispering reed,  
Or simple stile from mead to mead,  
Or sheepwalk up the windy wold;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw  
That hears the latest linnet trill,  
Nor quarry trench'd along the hill  
And haunted by the wrangling daw;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock;  
Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves  
To left and right thro' meadowy curves,  
That feed the mothers of the flock;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,  
And each reflects a kindlier day;  
And, leaving these, to pass away,  
I think, once more he seems to die.

## CI

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,  
The tender blossom flutter down,  
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,  
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,  
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,  
And many a rose-carnation feed  
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,  
The brook shall babble down the plain,  
At noon or when the lesser wain  
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,  
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;  
Or into silver arrows break  
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild  
A fresh association blow,  
And year by year the landscape grow  
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills  
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades:  
And year by year our memory fades  
From all the circle of the hills.

## CII

We leave the well-beloved place  
Where first we gazed upon the sky;  
The roofs, that heard our earliest cry,  
Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,  
As down the garden-walks I move,  
Two spirits of a diverse love  
Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, 'Here thy boyhood sung  
Long since its matin song, and heard  
The low love-language of the bird  
In native hazels tassel-hung.'

The other answers, 'Yea, but here  
Thy feet have stray'd in after hours  
With thy lost friend among the bowers,  
And this hath made them trebly dear.'

These two have striven half the day,  
And each prefers his separate claim,  
Poor rivals in a losing game,  
That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go: my feet are set  
To leave the pleasant fields and farms;  
They mix in one another's arms  
To one pure image of regret.

## CIII

On that last night before we went  
From out the doors where I was bred,  
I dream'd a vision of the dead,  
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,  
And maidens with me: distant hills  
From hidden summits fed with rills  
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.  
They sang of what is wise and good  
And graceful. In the centre stood  
A statue veil'd, to which they sang;

And which, tho' veil'd, was known to me,  
The shape of him I loved, and love  
For ever: then flew in a dove  
And brought a summons from the sea:

And when they learnt that I must go,  
They wept and wail'd, but led the way  
To where a little shallop lay  
At anchor in the flood below;

And on by many a level mead,  
And shadowing bluff that made the banks,  
We glided winding under ranks  
Of iris, and the golden reed;

And still as vaster grew the shore,  
And roll'd the floods in grander space,  
The maidens gather'd strength and grace  
And presence, lordlier than before;

And I myself, who sat apart  
And watch'd them, wax'd in every limb;  
I felt the thews of Anakim,  
The pulses of a Titan's heart;

As one would sing the death of war,  
And one would chant the history  
Of that great race which is to be,  
And one the shaping of a star;

Until the forward-creeping tides  
Began to foam, and we to draw  
From deep to deep, to where we saw  
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,  
But thrice as large as man he bent  
To greet us. Up the side I went,  
And fell in silence on his neck:

Whereat those maidens with one mind  
Bewail'd their lot; I did them wrong:  
'We served thee here,' they said, 'so long,  
And wilt thou leave us now behind?'

So rapt I was, they could not win  
An answer from my lips, but he  
Replying, 'Enter likewise ye  
And go with us.' they enter'd in.

And while the wind began to sweep  
A music out of sheet and shroud,  
We steer'd her toward a crimson cloud.  
That landlike slept along the deep.

## CIV

The time draws near the birth of Christ;  
The moon is hid, the night is still;  
A single church below the hill  
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,  
That wakens at this hour of rest  
A single murmur in the breast,  
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,  
In lands where not a memory strays,  
Nor landmark breathes of other days,  
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

## CV

To-night ungather'd let us leave  
This laurel, let this holly stand:  
We live within the stranger's land,  
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone  
And silent under other snows:  
There in due time the woodbine blows,  
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse  
The genial hour with mask and mime;  
For change of place, like growth of time,  
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,  
By which our lives are chiefly proved,  
A little spare the night I loved,  
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,  
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;  
For who would keep an ancient form  
Thro' which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;  
Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be blown;  
No dance, no motion, save alone  
What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.  
Long sleeps the summer in the seed;  
Run out your measured arcs, and lead  
The closing cycle rich in good.

## CVI

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,  
The flying cloud, the frosty light:  
The year is dying in the night;  
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
 Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
 The year is going, let him go;  
 Ring out the false, ring in the true.  
  
 Ring out the grief that saps the mind,  
 For those that here we see no more;  
 Ring out the feud of rich and poor,  
 Ring in redress to all mankind.  
  
 Ring out a slowly dying cause,  
 And ancient forms of party strife;  
 Ring in the nobler modes of life,  
 With sweeter manners, purer laws.  
  
 Ring out the want, the care, the sin,  
 The faithless coldness of the times;  
 Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,  
 But ring the fuller minstrel in.  
  
 Ring out false pride in place and blood,  
 The civic slander and the spite;  
 Ring in the love of truth and right,  
 Ring in the common love of good.  
  
 Ring out old shapes of foul disease;  
 Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;  
 Ring out the thousand wars of old,  
 Ring in the thousand years of peace.  
  
 Ring in the valiant man and free,  
 The larger heart, the kindlier hand;  
 Ring out the darkness of the land,  
 Ring in the Christ that is to be.

## CVII

It is the day when he was born,  
 A bitter day that early sank  
 Behind a purple-frosty bank  
 Of vapour, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves  
 To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies  
 The blast of North and East, and ice  
 Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,  
  
 And bristles all the brakes and thorns  
 To yon hard crescent, as she hangs  
 Above the wood which grides and clangs  
 Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass  
 To darken on the rolling brine  
 That breaks the coast. But fetch the  
 wine,  
 Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,  
 To make a solid core of heat;  
 Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat  
 Of all things ev'n as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,  
 With books and music, surely we  
 Will drink to him, whate'er he be,  
 And sing the songs he loved to hear.

CVIII  
 I will not shut me from my kind,  
 And, lest I stiffen into stone,  
 I will not eat my heart alone,  
 Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:  
  
 What profit lies in barren faith,  
 And vacant yearning, tho' with might  
 To scale the heaven's highest height,  
 Or dive below the wells of Death?  
  
 What find I in the highest place,  
 But mine own phantom chanting hymns?  
 And on the depths of death there swims  
 The reflex of a human face.  
  
 I'll rather take what fruit may be  
 Of sorrow under human skies:  
 'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,  
 Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

## CIX

Heart-affluence in discursive talk  
 From household fountains never dry;  
 The critic clearness of an eye,  
 That saw thro' all the Muses' walk;

Seraphic intellect and force  
 To seize and throw the doubts of man;  
 Impassion'd logic, which outran  
 The hearer in its fiery course;  
  
 High nature amorous of the good,  
 But touch'd with no ascetic gloom;  
 And passion pure in snowy bloom  
 Thro' all the years of April blood;  
  
 A love of freedom rarely felt,  
 Of freedom in her regal seat  
 Of England; not the schoolboy heat,  
 The blind hysterics of the Celt;

And manhood fused with female grace  
 In such a sort, the child would twine  
 A trustful hand, unask'd, in thine,  
 And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes  
 Have look'd on: if they look'd in vain,  
 My shame is greater who remain,  
 Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

## CX

Thy converse drew us with delight,  
 The men of rath and riper years:  
 The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,  
 Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,  
 The proud was half disarm'd of pride,  
 Nor cared the serpent at thy side  
 To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,  
 The flippant put himself to school  
 And heard thee, and the brazen fool  
 Was soften'd, and he knew not why;

While I, thy nearest, sat apart,  
And felt thy triumph was as mine;  
And loved them more, that they were  
thine,  
The graceful tact, the Christian art;  
Nor mine the sweetness or the skill,  
But mine the love that will not tire,  
And, born of love, the vague desire  
That spurs an imitative will.

## CXI

The churl in spirit, up or down  
Along the scale of ranks, thro' all,  
To him who grasps a golden ball,  
By blood a king, at heart a clown;  
The churl in spirit, how'er he veil  
His want in forms for fashion's sake,  
Will let his coltish nature break  
At seasons thro' the gilded pale:  
For who can always act? but he,  
To whom a thousand memories call,  
Not being less but more than all  
The gentleness he seem'd to be,  
Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd  
Each office of the social hour  
To noble manners, as the flower  
And native growth of noble mind;  
Nor ever narrowness or spite,  
Or villain fancy fleeting by,  
Drew in the expression of an eye,  
Where God and Nature met in light;  
And thus he bore without abuse  
The grand old name of gentleman,  
Defamed by every charlatan,  
And soil'd with all ignoble use.

## CXII

High wisdom holds my wisdom less,  
That I, who gaze with temperate eyes  
On glorious insufficiencies,  
Set light by narrower perfectness.

But thou, that fillest all the room  
Of all my love, art reason why  
I seem to cast a careless eye  
On souls, the lesser lords of doom.

For what wert thou? some novel power  
Sprang up for ever at a touch,  
And hope could never hope too much,  
In watching thee from hour to hour,

Large elements in order brought,  
And tracts of calm from tempest made,  
And world-wide fluctuation sway'd  
In vassal tides that follow'd thought.

## CXIII

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise;  
Yet how much wisdom sleeps with thee  
Which not alone had guided me,  
But served the seasons that may rise;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen  
In intellect, with force and skill  
To strive, to fashion, to fulfil—  
I doubt not what thou wouldest have been:

A life in civic action warm,  
A soul on highest mission sent,  
A potent voice of Parliament,  
A pillar steadfast in the storm,

Should licensed boldness gather force,  
Becoming, when the time has birth,  
A lever to uplift the earth  
And roll it in another course,

With thousand shocks that come and go,  
With agonies, with energies,  
With overthrows, and with cries,  
And undulations to and fro.

## CXIV

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail  
Against her beauty? May she mix  
With men and prosper! Who shall fix  
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire:  
She sets her forward countenance  
And leaps into the future chance,  
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—  
She cannot fight the fear of death.  
What is she, cut from love and faith,  
But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst  
All barriers in her onward race  
For power. Let her know her place;  
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,  
If all be not in vain; and guide  
Her footsteps, moving side by side  
With wisdom, like the younger child:

For she is earthly of the mind,  
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.  
O, friend, who camest to thy goal  
So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,  
Who grewest not alone in power  
And knowledge, but by year and hour  
In reverence and in charity.

## CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,  
Now burgeons every maze of quick  
About the flowering squares, and thick  
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,  
The distance takes a lovelier hue,  
And drown'd in yonder living blue  
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,  
The flocks are whiter down the vale,  
And milkier every milky sail  
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives  
In yonder greening gleam, and fly  
The happy birds, that change their sky  
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast  
Spring wakens too; and my regret  
Becomes an April violet,  
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

## CXVI

Is it, then, regret for buried time  
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,  
And meets the year, and gives and takes  
The colours of the crescent prime?

Not all: the songs, the stirring air,  
The life re-orient out of dust,  
Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust  
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine  
Upon me, while I muse alone;  
And that dear voice, I once have known,  
Still speak to me of me and mine:

Yet less of sorrow lives in me  
For days of happy commune dead;  
Less yearning for the friendship fled,  
Than some strong bond which is to be.

## CXVII

O days and hours, your work is this,  
To hold me from my proper place,  
A little while from his embrace,  
For fuller gain of after bliss:

That out of distance might ensue  
Desire of nearness doubly sweet;  
And unto meeting when we meet,  
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,  
And every span of shade that steals,  
And every kiss of toothed wheels,  
And all the courses of the suns.

## CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,  
The giant labouring in his youth;  
Nor dream of human love and truth,  
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead  
Are breathers of an ampler day  
For ever nobler ends. They say,  
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,  
And grew to seeming-random forms,  
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,  
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to  
clime,  
The herald of a higher race,  
And of himself in higher place,  
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;  
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe  
Like glories, move his course, and show  
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
And dip't in baths of hissing tears,  
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly  
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;  
Move upward, working out the beast,  
And let the ape and tiger die.

## CXIX

Doors, where my heart was used to beat  
So quickly, not as one that weeps  
I come once more; the city sleeps;  
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see  
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn  
A light-blue lane of early dawn,  
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,  
And bright the friendship of thine eye;  
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh  
I take the pressure of thine hand.

## CXX

I trust I have not wasted breath:  
I think we are not wholly brain,  
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,  
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning casts in clay:  
Let Science prove we are, and then  
What matters Science unto men,  
At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs  
Hereafter, up from childhood shape  
His action like the greater ape,  
But I was born to other things.

## CXXI

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun  
And ready, thou, to die with him,  
Thou watchest all things ever dim  
And dimmer, and a glory done:

The team is loosen'd from the wain,  
The boat is drawn upon the shore;  
Thou listenest to the closing door,  
And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,  
By thee the world's great work is heard  
Beginning, and the wakeful bird;  
Behind thee comes the greater light:

The market boat is on the stream,  
And voices hail it from the brink;  
Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,  
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name  
For what is one, the first, the last,  
Thou, like my present and my past,  
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

## CXXII

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,  
While I rose up against my doom,  
And yearn'd to burst the folded gloom,  
To bare the eternal Heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,  
The strong imagination roll  
A sphere of stars about my soul,  
In all her motion one with law;

If thou wert with me, and the grave  
Divide us not, be with me now,  
And enter in at breast and brow,  
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quicken'd with a livelier breath,  
And like an inconsiderate boy,  
As in the former flash of joy,  
I slip the thoughts of life and death;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,  
And every dew-drop paints a bow,  
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,  
And every thought breaks out a rose.

## CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.  
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!  
There where the long street roars, hath  
been  
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow  
From form to form, and nothing stands;  
They melt like mist, the solid lands,  
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,  
And dream my dream, and hold it true;  
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,  
I cannot think the thing farewell.

## CXXIV

That which we dare invoke to bless;  
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;  
He, They, One, All; within, without;  
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,  
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;  
Nor thro' the questions men may try,  
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,  
I heard a voice 'believe no more'  
And heard an ever-breaking shore  
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt  
The freezing reason's colder part,  
And like a man in wrath the heart  
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear:  
But that blind clamour made me wise;  
Then was I as a child that cries,  
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again  
What is, and no man understands;  
And out of darkness came the hands  
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

## CXXV

Whatever I have said or sung,  
Some bitter notes my harp would give,  
Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live  
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth:  
She did but look through dimmer eyes;  
Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,  
Because he felt so fix'd in truth:

And if the song were full of care,  
He breathed the spirit of the song;  
And if the words were sweet and strong  
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail  
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,  
And this electric force, that keeps  
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

## CXXVI

Love is and was my Lord and King,  
And in his presence I attend  
To hear the tidings of my friend,  
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,  
And will be, tho' as yet I keep  
Within his court on earth, and sleep  
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel  
Who moves about from place to place,  
And whispers to the worlds of space,  
In the deep night, that all is well.

## CXXVII

And all is well, tho' faith and form  
Be sunder'd in the night of fear;  
Well roars the storm to those that hear  
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,  
And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again  
The red fool-fury of the Seine  
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,  
And him, the lazarus, in his rags:  
They tremble, the sustaining crags;  
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;  
The fortress crashes from on high,  
The brute earth lightens to the sky,  
And the great *Æon* sinks in blood,

And compass'd by the fires of Hell;  
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,  
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,  
And smilest, knowing all is well.

## CXXVIII

The love that rose on stronger wings,  
Unpalsied when he met with Death,  
Is comrade of the lesser faith  
That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood  
Of onward time shall yet be made,  
And throned races may degrade;  
Yet O ye mysteries of good,

Wild Hours that fly with Hope and Fear,  
If all your office had to do  
With old results that look like new;  
If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,  
To fool the crowd with glorious lies,  
To cleave a creed in sects and cries,  
To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,  
To cramp the student at his desk,  
To make old bareness picturesque  
And tuft with grass a feudal tower;

Why then my scorn might well descend  
On you and yours. I see in part  
That all, as in some piece of art,  
Is toil cooperant to an end.

## CXXIX

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,  
So far, so near in woe and weal;  
O loved the most, when most I feel  
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;  
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;  
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,  
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;  
Loved deeper, darklier understood;  
Behold, I dream a dream of good,  
And mingle all the world with thee.

## CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;  
I hear thee where the waters run;  
Thou standest in the rising sun,  
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;  
But tho' I seem in star and flower  
To feel thee some diffusive power,  
I do not therefore love thee less:

My love involves the love before;  
My love is vaster passion now;  
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,  
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;  
I have thee still, and I rejoice;  
I prosper, circled with thy voice;  
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

## CXXXI

O living will that shalt endure  
When all that seems shall suffer shock,  
Rise in the spiritual rock,  
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust  
A voice as unto him that hears,  
A cry above the conquer'd years  
To one that with us works, and trust.

With faith that comes of self-control,  
The truths that never can be proved  
Until we close with all we loved,  
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,  
Demand not thou a marriage lay;  
In that it is thy marriage day  
Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss  
Since first he told me that he loved  
A daughter of our house; nor proved  
Since that dark day a day like this;

Tho' I since then have number'd o'er  
Some thrice three years: they went and  
came,

Remade the blood and changed the frame,  
And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm  
In dying songs a dead regret,  
But like a statue solid-set,  
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more  
Than in the summers that are flown,  
For I myself with these have grown  
To something greater than before;

Which makes appear the songs I made  
As echoes out of weaker times,  
As half but idle brawling rhymes,  
The sport of random sun and shade.

*This line, +  
"She virtue"  
at  
beginning of  
page.*

*Epilogue*

But where is she, the bridal flower,  
That must be made a wife ere noon?  
She enters, glowing like the moon  
Of Eden on its bridal bower:

On me she bends her blissful eyes  
And then on thee; they meet thy look  
And brighten like the star that shone  
Betwixt the palms of paradise.

O when her life was yet in bud,  
He too foretold the perfect rose.  
For thee she grew, for thee she grows  
For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy; full of power;  
As gentle; liberal-minded, great,  
Consistent; wearing all that weight  
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out: the noon is near,  
And I must give away the bride;  
She fears not, or with thee beside  
And me behind her, will not fear:

For I that danced her on my knee,  
That watch'd her on her nurse's arm,  
That shielded all her life from harm,  
At last must part with her to thee;

Now waiting to be made a wife,  
Her feet, my darling, on the dead;  
Their pensive tablets round her head,  
And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,  
The 'wilt thou' answer'd, and again  
The 'wilt thou' ask'd, till out of twain  
Her sweet 'I will' has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be read,  
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,  
By village eyes as yet unborn;  
The names are sign'd, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells  
The joy to every wandering breeze;  
The blind wall rocks, and on the trees  
The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

O happy hour, and happier hours  
Await them. Many a merry face  
Salutes them — maidens of the place,  
That peft us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour, behold the bride  
With him to whom her hand I gave.  
They leave the porch, they pass the grave  
That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,  
For them the light of life increased,  
Who stay to share the morning feast,  
Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance  
To meet and greet a whiter sun;  
My drooping memory will not shun  
The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,  
And hearts are warm'd and faces bloom,  
As drinking health to bride and groom  
We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I  
Conjecture of a stiller guest,  
Perchance, perchance, among the rest,  
And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,  
And those white-favour'd horses wait;  
They rise, but linger; it is late;  
Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark  
From little cloudlets on the grass,  
But sweeps away as out we pass  
To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,  
And talk of others that are wed,  
And how she look'd, and what he said,  
And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,  
The shade of passing thought, the wealth  
Of words and wit, the double health,  
The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance; — till I retire:  
Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,  
And high in heaven the streaming cloud,  
And on the downs a rising fire:

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,  
Till over down and over dale  
All night the shining vapour sail  
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,  
And catch at every mountain head,  
And o'er the friths that branch and  
spread  
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,  
With tender gloom the roof, the wall,  
And breaking let the splendour fall  
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,  
And, star and system rolling past,  
A soul shall draw from out the vast  
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved thro' life of lower phase,  
Result in man, be born and think,  
And act and love, a closer link  
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look  
On knowledge; under whose command  
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand  
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,  
For all we thought and loved and did,  
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed  
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man, that with me trod  
This planet, was a noble type  
Appearing ere the times were ripe,  
That friend of mine who lives in God,  
That God, which ever lives and loves,  
One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.

## THE EAGLE

FRAGMENT

[1851]

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE  
OF WELLINGTON

[1852]

## I

BURY the Great Duke  
With an empire's lamentation,  
Let us bury the Great Duke  
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty  
nation,  
Mourning when their leaders fall,  
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,  
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

## II

Where shall we lay the man whom we de-  
plore?  
Here, in streaming London's central roar.  
Let the sound of those he wrought for,  
And the feet of those he fought for,  
Echo round his bones for evermore.

## III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,  
As fits an universal woe,  
Let the long long procession go,  
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,  
And let the mournful martial music blow;  
The last great Englishman is low.

## IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,  
Remembering all his greatness in the Past.

No more in soldier fashion will he greet  
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.  
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:  
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,  
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,  
Whole in himself, a common good.

Mourn for the man of amplest influence,  
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,  
Our greatest yet with least pretense,  
Great in council and great in war,  
Foremost captain of his time,  
Rich in saving common-sense,  
And, as the greatest only are,  
In his simplicity sublime.

O good grey head which all men knew,  
O voice from which their omens all men  
drew,  
O iron nerve to true occasion true,  
O fall'n at length that tower of strength  
Which stood four-square to all the winds  
that blew!

Such was he whom we deplore.  
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.  
The great World-victor's victor will be  
seen no more.

## V

All is over and done:  
Render thanks to the Giver,  
England, for thy son.  
Let the bell be toll'd.  
Render thanks to the Giver,  
And render him to the mould.  
Under the cross of gold  
That shines over city and river,  
There he shall rest for ever  
Among the wise and the bold.  
Let the bell be toll'd:  
And a reverent people behold  
The towering car, the sable steeds:  
Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,  
Dark in its funeral fold.  
Let the bell be toll'd:

And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;

And the sound of the sorrowing anthem

roll'd

Thro' the dome of the golden cross;  
And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;  
He knew their voices of old.  
For many a time in many a clime  
His captain's-ear has heard them boom  
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom:  
When he with those deep voices wrought,  
Guarding realms and kings from shame;  
With those deep voices our dead captain  
taught

The tyrant, and asserts his claim  
In that dread sound to the great name,  
Which he has worn so pure of blame,  
In praise and in dispraise the same,  
A man of well-attemper'd frame.  
O civic muse, to such a name,

To such a name for ages long,  
To such a name,  
Preserve a broad approach of fame,  
And ever-echoing avenues of song.

## VI

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,  
With banner and with music, with soldier  
and with priest,  
With a nation weeping, and breaking on  
my rest?  
Mighty Seaman, this is he  
Was great by land as thou by sea.  
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous  
man,  
The greatest sailor since our world began.  
Now, to the roll of muffled drums,  
To thee the greatest soldier comes;  
For this is he  
Was great by land as thou by sea;  
His foes were thine; he kept us free;  
O give him welcome, this is he  
Worthy of our gorgeous rites,  
And worthy to be laid by thee;  
For this is England's greatest son,  
He that gain'd a hundred fights,  
Nor ever lost an English gun;  
This is he that far away  
Against the myriads of Assaye  
Clash'd with his fiery few and won;  
And underneath another sun,  
Warring on a later day,  
Round affrighted Lisbon drew  
The treble works, the vast designs  
Of his labour'd rampart-lines,  
Where he greatly stood at bay,  
Whence he issued forth anew,  
And ever great and greater grew,  
Beating from the wasted vines  
Back to France her banded swarms,  
Back to France with countless blows,  
Till o'er the hills her eagles flew  
Beyond the Pyrenean pines,  
Follow'd up in valley and glen  
With blare of bugle, clamour of men,  
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,  
And England pouring on her foes.  
Such a war had such a close.  
Again their ravening eagle rose  
In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing  
wings,  
And barking for the thrones of kings;  
Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown  
On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler  
down;  
A day of onsets of despair!  
Dash'd on every rocky square  
Their surging charges foam'd themselves  
away;  
Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;  
Thro' the long-tormented air  
Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,

And down we swept and charged and over-threw.  
So great a soldier taught us there,  
What long-enduring hearts could do  
In that world's-earthquake, Waterloo!  
Mighty Seaman, tender and true,  
And pure as he from taint of craven guile,  
O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,  
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,  
If aught of things that here befall  
Touch a spirit among things divine,  
If love of country move thee there at all,  
Be glad, because his bones are laid by  
thine!  
And thro' the centuries let a people's voice  
In full acclaim,  
A people's voice,  
The proof and echo of all human fame,  
A people's voice, when they rejoice  
At civic revel and pomp and game,  
Attest their great commander's claim  
With honour, honour, honour, honour to  
him,  
Eternal honour to his name.

## VII

A people's voice! we are a people yet.  
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams  
forget,  
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless  
Powers;  
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly  
set  
His Briton in blown seas and storming  
showers,  
We have a voice, with which to pay the  
debt  
Of boundless love and reverence and regret  
To those great men who fought, and kept  
it ours.  
And keep it ours, O God, from brute control;  
O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the  
soul  
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,  
And save the one true seed of freedom  
sown  
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,  
That sober freedom out of which there  
springs  
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings:  
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind  
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,  
And drill the raw world for the march of  
mind,  
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns  
be just.  
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.  
Remember him who led your hosts;  
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.  
Your cannons moulder on the seaward  
wall;  
His voice is silent in your council-hall

For ever; and whatever tempests lour  
For ever silent; even if they broke  
In thunder, silent; yet remember all  
He spoke among you, and the Man who  
spoke;  
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,  
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;  
Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow  
Thro' either babbling world of high and  
low;  
Whose life was work, whose language rife  
With rugged maxims hewn from life;  
Who never spoke against a foe;  
Whose eighty winters freeze with one re-  
buke  
All great self-seekers trampling on the  
right:  
Truth-teller was our England's Alfred  
named;  
Truth-lover was our English Duke;  
Whatever record leap to light  
He never shall be shamed.

## VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars  
Now to glorious burial slowly borne,  
Follow'd by the brave of other lands,  
He, on whom from both her open hands  
Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,  
And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.  
Yea, let all good things await  
Him who cares not to be great,  
But as he saves or serves the state.  
Not once or twice in our rough island-  
story,  
The path of duty was the way to glory;  
He that walks it, only thirsting  
For the right, and learns to deaden  
Love of self, before his journey closes,  
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting  
Into glossy purples, which outredden  
All voluptuous garden-roses.  
Not once or twice in our fair island-story,  
The path of duty was the way to glory:  
He, that ever following her commands,  
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,  
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has  
won  
His path upward, and prevail'd,  
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled  
Are close upon the shining table-lands  
To which our God Himself is moon and  
sun.  
Such was he: his work is done,  
But while the races of mankind endure,  
Let his great example stand  
Colossal, seen of every land,  
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman  
pure:  
Till in all lands and thro' all human story  
The path of duty be the way to glory:  
And let the land whose hearths he saved  
from shame  
For many and many an age proclaim

At civic revel and pomp and game,  
And when the long-illumined cities flame,  
Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,  
With honour, honour, honour, honour to  
him,  
Eternal honour to his name.

## IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung  
By some yet unmoulded tongue  
Far on in summers that we shall not see:  
Peace, it is a day of pain  
For one about whose patriarchal knee  
Late the little children clung:  
O peace, it is a day of pain  
For one, upon whose hand and heart and  
brain  
Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.  
Ours the pain, be his the gain!  
More than is of man's degree  
Must be with us, watching here  
At this, our great solemnity.  
Whom we see not we revere,  
We revere, and we refrain  
From talk of battles loud and vain,  
And brawling memories all too free  
For such a wise humility  
As befits a solemn fane:  
We revere, and while we hear  
The tides of Music's golden sea  
Setting toward eternity,  
Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,  
Until we doubt not that for one so true  
There must be other nobler work to do  
Than when he fought at Waterloo,  
And Victor he must ever be.  
For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill  
And break the shore, and evermore  
Make and break, and work their will;  
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads  
roll  
Round us, each with different powers,  
And other forms of life than ours,  
What know we greater than the soul?  
On God and Godlike men we build our  
trust.  
Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's  
ears:  
The dark crowd moves, and there are  
sobs and tears:  
The black earth yawns: the mortal disap-  
pears;  
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust:  
He is gone who seem'd so great.—  
Gone; but nothing can bereave him  
Of the force he made his own  
Being here, and we believe him  
Something far advanced in State,  
And that he wears a truer crown  
Than any wreath that man can weave him.  
Speak no more of his renown,  
Lay your earthly fancies down,  
And in the vast cathedral leave him.  
God accept him, Christ receive him.

## THE DAISY

WRITTEN AT EDINBURGH

[Composed 1853.—Published 1855.]

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,  
In lands of palm and southern pine;  
In lands of palm, of orange-blossom,  
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.  
What Roman strength Turbia show'd  
In ruin, by the mountain road;  
How like a gem, beneath, the city  
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.  
How richly down the rocky dell  
The torrent vineyard streaming fell  
To meet the sun and sunny waters,  
That only heaved with a summer swell.  
What slender campanili grew  
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;  
Where, here and there, on sandy beaches  
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.  
How young Columbus seem'd to rove,  
Yet present in his natal grove,  
Now watching high on mountain cornice,  
And steering, now, from a purple cove,  
Now pacing mute 'by ocean's rim;  
Till, in a narrow street and dim,  
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoleto,  
And drank, and loyally drank to him.  
Nor knew we well what pleased us most,  
Not the clipt palm of which they boast;  
But distant colour, happy hamlet,  
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,  
Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen  
A light amid its olives green;  
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;  
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,  
Where oleanders flush'd the bed  
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;  
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten  
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.  
We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,  
Those niched shapes of noble mould,  
A princely people's awful princes,  
The grave, severe Genovese of old.  
At Florence too what golden hours,  
In those long galleries, were ours;  
What drives about the fresh Cascinè,  
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.  
In bright vignettes, and each complete,  
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,  
Or palace, how the city glitter'd,  
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.  
But when we crost the Lombard plain  
Remember what a plague of rain;  
Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma;  
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain,

And stern and sad (so rare the smiles  
Of sunlight) look'd the Lombard piles;  
Porch-pillars on the lion resting,  
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,  
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,  
The height, the space, the gloom, the  
glory!  
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;  
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.  
I stood among the silent statues,  
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,  
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there  
A thousand shadowy-pencil'd valleys  
And snowy dells in a golden air.

Remember how we came at last  
To Como; shower and storm and blast  
Had blown the lake beyond his limit,  
And all was flooded; and how we past

From Como, when the light was grey,  
And in my head, for half the day,  
The rich Virgilian rustic measure  
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,  
As on the Lariano crept  
To that fair port below the castle  
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake  
A cypress in the moonlight shake,  
The moonlight touching o'er a terrace  
On tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,  
And up the snowy Splügen drew,  
But ere we reach'd the highest summit  
I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,  
And now it tells of Italy.  
O love, we two shall go no longer  
To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold  
Whose crying is a cry for gold:  
Yet here to-night in this dark city,  
When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,  
This nurseling of another sky  
Still in the little book you lent me,  
And where you tenderly laid it by:

And I forgot the clouded Forth,  
The gloom that saddens Heaven and Earth,  
The bitter east, the misty summer  
And grey metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,  
 Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,  
 Perchance, to dream you still beside me,  
 My fancy fled to the South again.

### THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

[1854]

I

HALF a league, half a league,  
 Half a league onward,  
 All in the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.  
 'Forward, the Light Brigade!  
 Charge for the guns!' he said:  
 Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.

II

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'  
 Was there a man dismay'd?  
 Not tho' the soldier knew  
 Some one had blunder'd:  
 Their's not to make reply,  
 Their's not to reason why,  
 Their's but to do and die:  
 Into the valley of Death  
 Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon in front of them  
 Volley'd and thunder'd;  
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
 Boldly they rode and well,  
 Into the jaws of Death,  
 Into the mouth of Hell  
 Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flash'd all their sabres bare,  
 Flash'd as they turn'd in air,  
 Sabring the gunners there,  
 Charging an army, while  
 All the world wonder'd:  
 Plunged in the battery-smoke  
 Right thro' the line they broke;  
 Cossack and Russian  
 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke  
 Shatter'd and sunder'd.  
 Then they rode back, but not,  
 Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,  
 Cannon to left of them,  
 Cannon behind them  
 Volley'd and thunder'd;  
 Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
 While horse and hero fell,  
 They that had fought so well

Came thro' the jaws of Death  
 Back from the mouth of Hell,  
 All that was left of them,  
 Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?  
 O the wild charge they made!  
 All the world wonder'd.  
 Honour the charge they made!  
 Honour the Light Brigade,  
 Noble six hundred!

### SONG FROM THE BROOK

[1855]

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,  
 I make a sudden sally  
 And sparkle out among the fern,  
 To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,  
 Or slip between the ridges,  
 By twenty thorps, a little town,  
 And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,  
 In little sharps and trebles,  
 I bubble into eddying bays,  
 I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret  
 By many a field and fallow,  
 And many a fairy foreland set  
 With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,  
 With here a blossom sailing,  
 And here and there a lusty trout,  
 And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake  
 Upon me, as I travel:  
 With many a silvery waterbreak  
 Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow  
 To join the brimming river,  
 For men may come and men may go,  
 But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,  
 I slide by hazel covers;  
 I move the sweet forget-me-nots  
 That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,  
Among my skimming swallows;  
I make the netted sunbeam dance  
Against my sandy shallows.  
I murmur under moon and stars  
In brambly wildernesses;  
I linger by my shingly bars;  
I loiter round my cresses;  
And out again I curve and flow  
To join the brimming river,  
For men may come and men may go,  
But I go on for ever.

## MAUD

[1855]

## PART I

## I

I HATE the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,  
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,  
The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,  
And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers 'Death.'

## II

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was found,  
His who had given me life—O father! O God! was it well?—  
Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and dinted into the ground:  
There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he fell.

## III

Did he fling himself down? who knows? for a vast speculation had fail'd,  
And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever wann'd with despair,  
And out he walk'd when the wind like a broken worldling wail'd,  
And the flying gold of the ruin'd woodlands drove thro' the air.

## IV

I remember the time, for the roots of my hair were stirr'd  
By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a whisper'd fright,  
And my pulses closed their gates with a shock on my heart as I heard  
The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the shuddering night.

## V

Villany somewhere! whose? One says, we are villains all.  
Not he: his honest fame should at least by me be maintain'd:

But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and the Hall,  
Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had left us flaccid and drain'd.

## VI

Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? we have made them a curse,  
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own;  
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse  
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone?

## VII

But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,  
When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or his word?  
Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind  
The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.

## VIII

Sooner or later I too may passively take the print  
Of the golden age—why not? I have neither hope nor trust;  
May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as a flint,  
Cheat and be cheated, and die: who knows? we are ashes and dust.

## IX

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,  
When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like swine,  
When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;  
Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges the wine.

## X

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,  
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,  
And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,  
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life,

## XI

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous centre-bits  
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights,  
While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as he sits  
To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

## xii

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe  
for a burial fee,  
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of  
children's bones,  
Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war  
by land and by sea,  
War with a thousand battles, and shaking  
a hundred thrones.

## xiii

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder  
round by the hill,  
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the  
three-decker out of the foam,  
That the smooth-faced snubnosed rogue  
would leap from his counter and till,  
And strike, if he could, were it but with his  
cheating yardwand, home.—

## xiv

What! am I raging alone as my father  
raged in his mood?  
Must I too creep to the hollow and dash  
myself down and die  
Rather than hold by the law that I made,  
nevermore to brood  
On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a  
wretched swindler's lie?

## xv

Would there be sorrow for me? there was  
*love* in the passionate shriek,  
Love for the silent thing that had made  
false haste to the grave—  
Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and  
thought he would rise and speak  
And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God,  
as he used to rave.

## xvi

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am  
sick of the moor and the main.  
Why should I stay? can a sweeter chance  
ever come to me here?  
O, having the nerves of motion as well as  
the nerves of pain,  
Were it not wise if I fled from the place  
and the pit and the fear?

## xvii

Workmen up at the Hall! — they are com-  
ing back from abroad;  
The dark old place will be gilt by the  
touch of a millionaire:  
I have heard, I know not whence, of the  
singular beauty of Maud;  
I play'd with the girl when a child; she  
promised then to be fair.

## xviii

Maud with her venturesous climbings and  
tumbles and childish escapes,  
Maud the delight of the village, the ringing  
joy of the Hall,

Maud with her sweet purse-mouth when  
my father dangled the grapes,  
Maud the beloved of my mother, the moon-  
faced darling of all,—

## xix

What is she now? My dreams are bad.  
She may bring me a curse.  
No, there is fatter game on the moor;  
she will let me alone.  
Thanks, for the fiend best knows whether  
woman or man be the worse.  
I will bury myself in myself, and the Devil  
may pipe to his own.

II *Frost and Maud*

Long have I sigh'd for a calm; God grant  
I may find it at last!  
It will never be broken by Maud, she has  
neither savour nor salt,  
But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found  
when her carriage past,  
Perfectly beautiful: let it be granted her:  
where is the fault?  
All that I saw (for her eyes were down-  
cast, not to be seen)  
Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly  
null. *Frost*  
Dead perfection, no more; nothing more,  
if it had not been  
For a chance of travel, a paleness, an  
hour's defect of the rose,  
Or an underlip, you may call it a little  
too ripe, too full,  
Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in  
a sensitive nose,  
From which I escaped heart-free, with the  
least little touch of spleen.

III *Vision of the Night*

Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so  
cruelly meek,  
Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful  
folly was drown'd,  
Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash  
dead on the cheek.  
Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on  
a gloom profound;  
Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a  
transient wrong  
Done but in thought to your beauty, and  
ever as pale as before  
Growing and fading and growing upon me  
without a sound,  
Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike,  
half the night long  
Growing and fading and growing, till I  
could bear it no more,  
But arose, and all by myself in my own  
dark garden ground,  
Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung  
shipwrecking roar,  
Now to the scream of a madden'd beach  
dragg'd down by the wave,

*Closing lines change after*

Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly  
glimmer, and found  
The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low  
in his grave.

IV *Even*

## I

*Bitterness after*  
A million emeralds break from the ruby-  
budded lime  
In the little grove where I sit — ah, where-  
fore cannot I be  
Like things of the season gay, like the  
bountiful season bland,  
When the far-off sail is blown by the  
breeze of a softer clime,  
Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a  
crescent of sea,  
The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring  
of the land?

## II

Below me, there, is the village, and looks  
how quiet and small!  
And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gos-  
sip, scandal, and spite;  
And Jack on his ale-house bench has as  
many lies as a Czar;  
And here on the landward side, by a red  
rock, glimmers the Hall;  
And up in the high Hall-garden I see her  
pass like a light;  
But sorrow seize me if ever that light be  
my leading star!

## III

When have I bow'd to her father, the  
wrinkled head of the race?  
I met her to-day with her brother, but not  
to her brother I bow'd;  
I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by  
on the moor;  
But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over  
her beautiful face.  
O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it,  
in being so proud;  
Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I  
am nameless and poor.

## IV

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready  
to slander and steal;  
I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like  
a stoic, or like  
A wiser epicurean, and let the world have  
its way:  
For nature is one with rapine, a harm no  
preacher can heal;  
The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the  
sparrow spear'd by the shrike,  
And the whole little wood where I sit is a  
world of plunder and prey.

## V

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and  
Beauty fair in her flower;  
Do we move ourselves, or are moved by  
an unseen hand at a game  
That pushes us off from the board, and  
others ever succeed?  
Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other  
here for an hour;  
We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and  
grin at a brother's shame;  
However we brave it out, we men are a  
little breed.

## VI

A monstrous eft was of old the Lord and  
Master of Earth,  
For him did his high sun flame, and his  
river billowing ran,  
And he felt himself in his force to be Na-  
ture's crowning race.  
As nine months go to the shaping an in-  
fant ripe for his birth,  
So many a million of ages have gone to  
the making of man:  
He now is first, but is he the last? is he  
not too base?

## VII

The man of science himself is fonder of  
glory, and vain,  
An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit  
bounded and poor;  
The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd  
into folly and vice.  
I would not marvel at either, but keep a  
temperate brain;  
For not to desire or admire, if a man  
could learn it, were more  
Than to walk all day like the sultan of old  
in a garden of spice.

## VIII

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis  
hid by the veil.  
Who knows the ways of the world, how  
God will bring them about?  
Our planet is one, the suns are many, the  
world is wide.  
Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I  
shriek if a Hungary fail?  
Or an infant civilization be ruled with rod  
or with knot?  
I have not made the world, and He that  
made it will guide.

## IX

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet  
woodland ways,  
Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless  
peace be my lot,  
Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in  
the hubbub of lies;

*"longing for calm"*

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

65.

From the long-neck'd geese of the world  
that are ever hissing dispraise  
Because their natures are little, and,  
whether he heed it or not,  
Where each man walks with his head in a  
cloud of poisonous flies.

x

And most of all would I flee from the cruel  
madness of love,  
The honey of poison-flowers and all the  
measureless ill.  
Ah Maud, you milkwhite fawn, you are all  
unmeet for a wife.  
Your mother is mute in her grave as her  
image in marble above;  
Your father is ever in London, you wander  
about at your will;  
You have but fed on the roses, and lain  
in the lilies of life.

*"Fighting against his growing passion."*

V

A voice by the cedar tree,  
In the meadow under the Hall!  
She is singing an air that is known to me,  
A passionate ballad gallant and gay,  
A martial song like a trumpet's call!  
Singing alone in the morning of life,  
In the happy morning of life and of May,  
Singing of men that in battle array,  
Ready in heart and ready in hand,  
March with banner and bugle and fife  
To the death, for their native land.

II

Maud with her exquisite face,  
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny  
sky,  
And feet like sunny gems on an English  
green,  
Maud in the light of her youth and her  
grace.  
Singing of Death, and of Honour that  
cannot die,  
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid  
and mean,  
And myself so languid and base

III

Silence, beautiful voice!  
Be still, for you only trouble the mind  
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,  
A glory I shall not find.  
Still! I will hear you no more.  
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a  
choice  
But to move to the meadow and fall before  
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,  
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,  
Not her, not her, but a voice.

VI

*first interview with  
Maud.*

I

Morning arises stormy and pale,  
No sun, but a wannish glare  
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud,  
And the budded peaks of the wood are  
bow'd  
Caught and cuff'd by the gale:  
I had fancied it would be fair.

II

Whom but Maud should I meet  
Last night, when the sunset burn'd  
On the blossom'd gable-ends  
At the head of the village street,  
Whom but Maud should I meet?  
And she touch'd my hand with a smile so  
sweet,  
She made me divine amends  
For a courtesy not return'd.

III

And thus a delicate spark  
Of glowing and growing light  
Thro' the livelong hours of the dark  
Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams  
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame;  
Till at last when the morning came  
In a cloud, it faded, and seems  
But an ashen-grey delight.

IV

What if with her sunny hair,  
And smile as sunny as cold,  
She meant to weave me a snare  
Of some coquettish deceit,  
Cleopatra-like as of old  
To entangle me when we met,  
To have her lion roll in a silken net  
And fawn at a victor's feet.

V

Ah, what shall I be at fifty  
Should Nature keep me alive,  
If I find the world so bitter  
When I am but twenty-five?  
Yet, if she were not a cheat,  
If Maud were all that she seem'd,  
And her smile were all that I dream'd  
Then the world were not so bitter  
But a smile could make it sweet.

VI

What if tho' her eye seem'd full  
Of a kind intent to me,  
What if that dandy-despot, he,  
That jewell'd mass of millinery,  
That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull  
Smelling of musk and of insolence,  
Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,  
Who wants the finer politic sense  
To mask, tho' but in his own behoof

With a glassy smile his brutal scorn—  
What if he had told her yestermorn  
How prettily for his own sweet sake  
A face of tenderness might be feign'd,  
And a moist mirage in desert eyes,  
That so, when the rotten hustings shake  
In another month to his brazen lies,  
A wretched vote may be gain'd.

## VII

For a raven ever croaks, at my side,  
Keep watch and ward, keep watch and  
ward,  
Or thou wilt prove their tool.  
Yea, too, myself from myself I guard,  
For often a man's own angry pride  
Is cap and bells for a fool.

## VIII

Perhaps the smile and tender tone  
Came out of her pitying womanhood,  
For am I not, am I not, here alone  
So many a summer since she died,  
My mother, who was so gentle and good?  
Living alone in an empty house,  
Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,  
Where I hear the dead at midday moan,  
And the shrieking rush of the wainscot  
mouse,  
And my own sad name in corners cried,  
When the shiver of dancing leaves is  
thrown  
About its echoing chambers wide,  
Till a morbid hate and horror have grown  
Of a world in which I have hardly mixt,  
And a morbid eating lichen fixt  
On a heart half-turn'd to stone.

## IX

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught  
By that you swore to withstand?  
For what was it else within me wrought  
But, I fear, the new strong wine of love,  
That made my tongue so stammer and  
trip  
When I saw the treasured splendour, her  
hand,  
Come sliding out of her sacred glove,  
And the sunlight broke from her lip?

## X

I have play'd with her when a child;  
She remembers it now we meet.  
Ah well, well, well, I *may* be beguiled  
By some coquettish deceit.  
Yet, if she were not a cheat,  
If Maud were all that she seem'd,  
And her smile had all that I dream'd,  
Then the world were not so bitter  
But a smile could make it sweet.

## VICTORIAN POETRY

## VII

*she seems to his own & his birth & death & & &*  
Did I hear it half in a doze  
Long since, I know not where?  
Did I dream it an hour ago,  
When asleep in this arm-chair?

## II

Men were drinking together,  
Drinking and talking of me;  
'Well, if it prove a girl, the boy  
Will have plenty: so let it be.'

## III

Is it an echo of something  
Read with a boy's delight,  
Viziers nodding together  
In some Arabian night?

## IV

Strange, that I hear two men,  
Somewhere, talking of me;  
'Well, if it prove a girl, *my* boy  
Will have plenty: so let it be.'

## VIII

*she did not return to her*  
She came to the village church,  
And sat by a pillar alone;  
An angel watching an urn  
Wept over her, carved in stone;  
And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,  
And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd  
To find they were met by my own;  
And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat  
stronger  
And thicker, until I heard no longer  
The snowy-banded, dilettante,  
Delicate-handed priest intone;  
And thought, is it pride, and mused and  
sigh'd  
'No surely, now it cannot be pride.'

IX *at sunset of young*  
*her*

I was walking a mile,  
More than a mile from the shore,  
The sun look'd out with a smile  
Betwixt the cloud and the moor,  
And riding at set of day  
Over the dark moor land,  
Rapidly riding far away,  
She waved to me with her hand.  
There were two at her side,  
Something flash'd in the sun,  
Down by the hill I saw them ride,  
In a moment they were gone:  
Like a sudden spark  
Struck vainly in the night,  
Then returns the dark  
With no more hope of light.

## X

## I

Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?  
 Was not one of the two at her side  
 This new-made lord, whose splendour  
     plucks  
 The slavish hat from the villager's head?  
 Whose old grandfather has lately died,  
 Gone to a blacker pit, for whom  
 Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks  
 And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom  
 Wrought, till he crept from a gutted mine  
 Master of half a servile shire,  
 And left his coal all turn'd into gold  
 To a grandson, first of his noble line,  
 Rich in the grace all women desire,  
 Strong in the power that all men adore,  
 And simper and set their voices lower,  
 And soften as if to a girl, and hold  
 Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,  
 Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,  
 New as his title, built last year,  
 There amid perky larches and pine,  
 And over the sullen-purple moor  
 (Look at it) pricking a cockney ear.

## II

What, has he found my jewel out?  
 For one of the two that rode at her side  
 Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he:  
 Bound for the Hall, and I think for a bride.  
 Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.  
 Maud could be gracious too, no doubt,  
 To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,  
 A bought commission, a waxen face,  
 A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—  
 Bought? what is it he cannot buy?  
 And therefore splenetic, personal, base,  
 A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,  
 At war with myself and a wretched race,  
 Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

## III

Last week came one to the county town,  
 To preach our poor little army down,  
 And play the game of the despot kings,  
 Tho' the state has done it and thrice as  
     well:  
 This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,  
 Whose ear is cramm'd with his cotton, and  
     rings  
 Even in dreams to the chink of his pence,  
 This huckster put down war! can he tell  
 Whether war be a cause or a consequence?  
 Put down the passions that make earth  
     Hell!  
 Down with ambition, avarice, pride,  
 Jealousy, down! cut off from the mind  
 The bitter springs of anger and fear;  
 Down too, down at your own fireside,  
 With the evil tongue and the evil ear,  
 For each is at war with mankind.

## IV

I wish I could hear again  
 The chivalrous battle-song  
 That she warbled alone in her joy!  
 I might persuade myself then  
 She would not do herself this great wrong,  
 To take a wanton dissolute boy  
 For a man and leader of men.

## V

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,  
 Like some of the simple great ones gone  
 For ever and ever by,  
 One still strong man in a blatant land,  
 Whatever they call him, what care I,  
 Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one  
 Who can rule and dare not lie.

## VI

And ah for a man to arise in me,  
That the man I am may cease to be!

## XI

*The longings for love*  
 I  
 O let the solid ground  
 Not fail beneath my feet  
 Before my life has found  
 What some have found so sweet;  
 Then let come what come may,  
 What matter if I go mad, *pronunciation running through poem*  
 I shall have had my day.

## II

*Breathless here with this.*  
 Let the sweet heavens endure,  
 Not close and darken above me  
 Before I am quite quite sure  
 That there is one to love me;  
 Then let come what come may  
 To a life that has been so sad,  
 I shall have had my day.

## XII

*interview with Maud*  
 I  
 Birds in the high Hall-garden  
 When twilight was falling,  
 Maud, Maud, Maud, *remarking to audience always in it*  
 They were crying and calling.

## II

Where was Maud? in our wood;  
 And I, who else, was with her,  
 Gathering woodland lilies,  
 Myriads blow together.

## III

*Birds in our wood sang*  
 Ringing thro' the valleys,  
 Maud is here, here, here  
 In among the lilies.

## IV

I kiss'd her slender hand,  
She took the kiss sedately;  
Maud is not seventeen,  
But she is tall and stately.

## V

I to cry out on pride  
Who have won her favour!  
O Maud were sure of Heaven  
If lowliness could save her.

## VI

I know the way she went  
Home with her maiden posy,  
For her feet have touch'd the meadows  
And left the daisies rosy.

## VII

Birds in the high Hall-garden  
Were crying and calling to her,  
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?  
One is come to woo her.

## VIII

Look, a horse at the door,  
And little King Charley snarling,  
Go back, my lord, across the moor,  
You are not her darling.

XIII. *Maud's little brother*

## I

Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,  
Is that a matter to make me fret?  
That a calamity hard to be borne?  
Well, he may live to hate me yet.  
Fool that I am to be vext with his pride!  
I past him, I was crossing his lands;  
He stood on the path a little aside;  
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,  
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and white,  
And six feet two, as I think, he stands;  
But his essences turn'd the live air sick,  
And barbarous opulence jewel-thick  
Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

## II

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair,  
I long'd so heartily then and there  
To give him the grasp of fellowship;  
But while I past he was humming an air,  
Stopt, and then with a riding whip  
Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,  
And curving a contumelious lip,  
Gorgonized me from head to foot  
With a stony British stare.

## III

Why sits he here in his father's chair?  
That old man never comes to his place:  
Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen?  
For only once, in the village street,

Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,  
A grey old wolf and a lean.  
Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat;  
For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,  
She might by a true descent be untrue;  
And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet:  
Tho' I fancy her sweetness only due  
To the sweeter blood by the other side;  
Her mother has been a thing complete,  
However she came to be so allied.  
And fair without, faithful within,  
Maud to him is nothing akin:  
Some peculiar mystic grace  
Made her only the child of her mother,  
And heap'd the whole inherited sin  
On that huge scapegoat of the race,  
All, all upon the brother.

## IV

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!  
Has not his sister smiled on me?

## XIV

## I

Maud has a garden of roses  
And lilies fair on a lawn;  
There she walks in her state  
And tends upon bed and bower,  
And thither I climb'd at dawn  
And stood by her garden-gate;  
A lion ramps at the top,  
He is claspt by a passion-flower.

## II

Maud's own little oak-room  
(Which Maud, like a precious stone  
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,  
Lights with herself, when alone  
She sits by her music and books,  
And her brother lingers late  
With a roystering company) looks  
Upon Maud's own garden-gate:  
And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as white  
As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid  
On the hasp of the window, and my  
Delight  
Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost,  
to glide,  
Like a beam of the seventh Heaven, down  
to my side,  
There were but a step to be made.

## III

The fancy flatter'd my mind,  
And again seem'd overbold;  
Now I thought that she cared for me,  
Now I thought she was kind  
Only because she was cold.

## IV

I heard no sound where I stood  
But the rivulet on from the lawn

Running down to my own dark wood;  
Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it  
swell'd  
Now and then in the dim-grey dawn;  
But I look'd, and round, all round the  
house I beheld  
The death-white curtain drawn;  
Felt a horror over me creep,  
Prickle my skin and catch my breath,  
Knew that the death-white curtain meant  
but sleep,  
Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool  
of the sleep of death.

## XV

So dark a mind within me dwells,  
And I make myself such evil cheer,  
That if I be dear to some one else,  
Then some one else may have much to  
fear;  
But if I be dear to some one else,  
Then I should be to myself more dear.  
Shall I not take care of all that I think,  
Yea, ev'n of wretched meat and drink,  
If I be dear,  
If I be dear to some one else.

XVI "he will declare  
his love"  
foreboding

## I.

This lump of earth has left his estate  
The lighter by the loss of his weight;  
And so that he find what he went to  
seek,  
And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and drown  
His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,  
He may stay for a year who has gone for  
a week:  
But this is the day when I must speak,  
And I see my Oread coming down,  
O this is the day!  
O beautiful creature, what am I  
That I dare to look her way;  
Think I may hold dominion sweet,  
Lord of the pulse that is lord of her  
breast,  
And dream of her beauty with tender  
dread,  
From the delicate Arab arch of her feet  
To the grace that, bright and light as the  
crest  
Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,  
And she knows it not: O, if she knew it,  
To know her beauty might half undo it.  
I know it the one bright thing to save  
My yet young life in the wilds of Time,  
Perhaps from madness, perhaps from  
crime,  
Perhaps from a selfish grave.

## II

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,  
Dare I bid her abide by her word?

Should I love her so well if she  
Had given her word to a thing so low?  
Shall I love her as well if she  
Can break her word were it even for me?  
I trust that it is not so.

## III

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,  
Let not my tongue be a thrall to my  
eye,  
For I must tell her before we part,  
I must tell her, or die.

XVII "Accepted"  
"she cravat - 1  
her  
Note bit of water  
and wood.  
Torchin around."

Go not, happy day,  
From the shining fields,  
Go not, happy day,  
Till the maiden yields.  
Rosy is the West,  
Rosy is the South,  
Roses are her cheeks,  
And a rose her mouth.  
When the happy Yes  
Falters from her lips,  
Pass and blush the news  
O'er the blowing ships.  
Over blowing seas,  
Over seas at rest,  
Pass the happy news,  
Blush it thro' the West;  
Till the red man dance  
By his red cedar tree,  
And the red man's babe  
Leap, beyond the sea.  
Blush from West to East,  
Blush from East to West,  
Till the West is East.  
Blush it thro' the West.  
Rosy is the West,  
Rosy is the South,  
Roses are her cheeks,  
And a rose her mouth.

XVIII "Sweet sister & dear."  
I "Happy" "Sigh - Cedar  
laurel chain  
in our  
yearning

I have led her home, my love, my only — with  
friend.  
There is none like her, none.  
And never yet so warmly ran my blood  
And sweetly, on and on  
Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,  
Full to the banks, close on the promised  
good.

## II

None like her, none.  
Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering  
talk  
Seem'd her light foot along the garden  
walk,  
And shook my heart to think she comes  
once more;  
But even then I heard her close the door,  
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she  
is gone.

## III

There is none like her, none.  
 Nor will be when our summers have deceased.  
 O, art thou sighing for Lebanon  
 In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,  
 Sighing for Lebanon,  
 Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,  
 Upon a pastoral slope as fair,  
 And looking to the South, and fed  
 With honey'd rain and delicate air,  
 And haunted by the starry head  
 Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,  
 And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;  
 And over whom thy darkness must have spread  
 With such delight as theirs of old, thy great  
 Forefathers of the thornless garden, there  
 Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she came.

## IV

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,  
 And you fair stars that crown a happy day  
 Go in and out as if at merry play,  
 Who am no more so all forlorn,  
 As when it seem'd far better to be born  
 To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand,  
 Than nursed at ease and brought to understand  
 A sad astrology, the boundless plan  
 That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,  
 Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,  
 Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand  
 His nothingness into man.

## V

But now shine on, and what care I,  
 Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl  
 The countercharm of space and hollow sky,  
 And do accept my madness, and would die  
 To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

## VI

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death may give  
 More life to Love than is or ever was  
 In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.  
 Let no one ask me how it came to pass;  
 It seems that I am happy, that to me  
 A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,  
 A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

## VII

Not die; but live a life of truest breath,  
 And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.

O, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs,  
 Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death?  
 Make answer, Maud my bliss,  
 Maud made my Maud by that long lover's kiss,  
 Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?  
 'The dusky strand of Death inwoven here  
 With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear.'

## VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell  
 Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?  
 And hark the clock within, the silver knell  
 Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal white,  
 And died to live, long as my pulses play;  
 But now by this my love has closed her sight  
 And given false death her hand, and stol'n away  
 To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell  
 Among the fragments of the golden day.  
 May nothing there her maiden grace affright!  
 Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell.  
 My bride to be, my evermore delight,  
 My own heart's heart and ownest own, farewell;  
 It is but for a little space I go:  
 And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell  
 Beat to the noiseless music of the night!  
 Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow  
 Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?  
 I have climb'd nearer out of lonely Hell,  
 Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,  
 Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,  
 Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe  
 That seems to draw—but it shall not be so:  
 Let all be well, be well. *Dramatic irony*  
*in Romeo & J.*

## XIX

I  
 Her brother is coming back to-night,  
 Breaking up my dream of delight.

## II

My dream? do I dream of bliss?  
 I have walk'd awake with Truth  
 O when did a morning shine  
 So rich in atonement as this  
 For my dark-dawning youth,  
 Darken'd watching a mother decline  
 And that dead man at her heart and mine:  
 For who was left to watch her but I?  
 Yet so did I let my freshness die.

## III

I trust that I did not talk  
To gentle Maud in our walk  
(For often in lonely wanderings  
I have cursed him even to lifeless things)  
But I trust that I did not talk,  
Not touch on her father's sin:  
I am sure I did but speak  
Of my mother's faded cheek  
When it slowly grew so thin,  
That I felt she was slowly dying  
Vext with lawyers and harass'd with debt:  
For how often I caught her with eyes all  
wet,  
Shaking her head at her son and sighing  
A world of trouble within!

## IV

And Maud too, Maud was moved  
To speak of the mother she loved  
As one scarce less forlorn,  
Dying abroad and it seems apart  
From him who had ceased to share her  
heart,  
And ever mourning over the feud,  
The household Fury sprinkled with blood  
By which our houses are torn:  
How strange was what she said,  
When only Maud and the brother  
Hung over her dying bed —  
That Maud's dark father and mine  
Had bound us one to the other,  
Betrothed us over their wine,  
On the day when Maud was born;  
Seal'd her mine from her first sweet breath.  
Mine, mine by a right, from birth till death,  
Mine, mine — our fathers have sworn.

## V

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat  
To dissolve the precious seal on a bond,  
That, if left uncancell'd, had been so sweet:  
And none of us thought of a something  
beyond,  
A desire that awoke in the heart of the  
child,  
As it were a duty done to the tomb,  
To be friends for her sake, to be reconciled;  
And I was cursing them and my doom,  
And letting a dangerous thought run wild  
While often abroad in the fragrant gloom  
Of foreign churches — I see her there,  
Bright English lily, breathing a prayer  
To be friends, to be reconciled!

## VI

But then what a flint is he!  
Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,  
I find whenever she touch'd on me  
This brother had laugh'd her down,  
And at last, when each came home,  
He had darken'd into a frown,

Chid her, and forbid her to speak  
To me, her friend of the years before;  
And this was what had redden'd her cheek  
When I bow'd to her on the moor.

## VII

Yet Maud, altho' not blind  
To the faults of his heart and mind,  
I see she cannot but love him,  
And says he is rough but kind,  
And wishes me to approve him,  
And tells me, when she lay  
Sick once, with a fear of worse,  
That he left his wine and horses and play,  
Sat with her, ready to her, night and day,  
And tended her like a nurse.

## VIII

Kind? but the deathbed desire  
Spurn'd by this heir of the liar —  
Rough but kind? yet I know  
He has plotted against me in this,  
That he plots against me still.  
Kind to Maud? that were not amiss.  
Well, rough but kind; why let it be so:  
For shall not Maud have her will?

## IX

For, Maud, so tender and true,  
As long as my life endures  
I feel I shall owe you a debt,  
That I never can hope to pay;  
And if ever I should forget  
That I owe this debt to you  
And for your sweet sake to yours;  
O then, what then shall I say? —  
If ever I should forget,  
May God make me more wretched  
Than ever I have been yet!

## X

So now I have sworn to bury  
All this dead body of hate,  
I feel so free and so clear  
By the loss of that dead weight,  
That I should grow light-headed, I fear,  
Fantastically merry;  
But that her brother comes, like a blight  
On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

## XX

## I

Strange, that I felt so gay,  
Strange, that I tried to-day  
To beguile her melancholy;  
The Sultan, as we name him, —  
She did not wish to blame him —  
But he vexed her and perplexed her  
With his worldly talk and folly:  
Was it gentle to reprove her  
For stealing out of view  
From a little lazy lover  
Who but claims her as his due?

Or for chilling his caresses  
By the coldness of her manners,  
Nay, the plainness of her dresses?  
Now I know her but in two,  
Nor can pronounce upon it  
If one should ask me whether  
The habit, hat, and feather,  
Or the frock and gipsy bonnet  
Be the neater and completer;  
For nothing can be sweeter  
Than maiden Maud in either.

## II

But to-morrow, if we live,  
Our ponderous squire will give  
A grand political dinner  
To half the squirelings near;  
And Maud will wear her jewels,  
And the bird of prey will hover,  
And the titmouse hope to win her  
With his chirrup at her ear.

## III

A grand political dinner  
To the men of many acres,  
A gathering of the Tory,  
A dinner and then a dance  
For the maids and marriage-makers,  
And every eye but mine will glance  
At Maud in all her glory.

## IV

For I am not invited,  
But, with the Sultan's pardon,  
I am all as well delighted,  
For I know her own rose-garden,  
And mean to linger in it  
Till the dancing will be over;  
And then, oh then, come out to me  
For a minute, but for a minute,  
Come out to your own true lover,  
That your true lover may see  
Your glory also, and render  
All homage to his own darling,  
Queen Maud in all her splendour.

## XXI "Boys de Bell"

Rivulet crossing my ground,  
And bringing me down from the Hall  
This garden-rose that I found,  
Forgetful of Maud and me,  
And lost in trouble and moving round  
Here at the head of a tinkling fall,  
And trying to pass to the sea;  
O Rivulet, born at the Hall,  
My Maud has sent it by thee  
(If I read her sweet will right)  
On a blushing mission to me,  
Saying in odour and colour, 'Ah, be .  
Among the roses to-night.'

*greatly  
which has  
suffered from  
contemporary  
taste.*

XXII "I left  
her."

Come into the garden, Maud,  
For the black bat, night, has flown,  
Come into the garden, Maud,  
I am here at the gate alone;  
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,  
And the musk of the rose is blown.

## II

For a breeze of morning moves,  
And the planet of Love is on high,  
Beginning to faint in the light that she  
loves

On a bed of daffodil sky,  
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,  
To faint in his light, and to die.

## III

All night have the roses heard  
The flute, violin, bassoon;  
All night has the casement jessamine  
stirr'd  
To the dancers dancing in tune;  
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,  
And a hush with the setting moon.

## IV

I said to the lily, 'There is but one  
With whom she has heart to be gay.  
When will the dancers leave her alone?  
She is weary of dance and play.'  
Now half to the setting moon are gone,  
And half to the rising day;  
Low on the sand and loud on the stone  
The last wheel echoes away.

## V

I said to the rose, 'The brief night goes  
In babble and revel and wine.  
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,  
For one that will never be thine?  
But mine, but mine,' so I swear to the  
rose,  
'For ever and ever, mine.'

## VI

And the soul of the rose went into my  
blood,  
As the music clash'd in the hall;  
And long by the garden lake I stood,  
For I heard your rivulet fall  
From the lake to the meadow and on to  
the wood,  
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

## VII

From the meadow your walks have left so  
sweet  
That whenever a March-wind sighs  
He sets the jewel-print of your feet  
In violets blue as your eyes,  
To the woody hollows in which we meet  
And the valleys of Paradise.

## VIII

The slender acacia would not shake  
 One long milk-bloom on the tree;  
 The white lake-blossom fell into the lake  
   As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;  
 But the rose was awake all night for your  
   sake,  
   Knowing your promise to me;  
 The lilies and roses were all awake,  
   They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

## IX

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,  
 Come hither, the dances are done,  
 In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,  
   Queen lily and rose in one;  
 Shine out, little head, sunning over with  
   curls,  
   To the flowers, and be their sun.

## X

There has fallen a splendid tear  
   From the passion-flower at the gate.  
 She is coming, my dove, my dear;  
   She is coming, my life, my fate;  
 The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is  
   near;'  
   And the white rose weeps, 'She is late:'  
 The larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear,'  
   And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

## XI

She is coming, my own, my sweet;  
   Were it ever so airy a tread,  
 My heart would hear her and beat,  
   Were it earth in an earthy bed;  
 My dust would hear her and beat,  
   Had I lain for a century dead;  
 Would start and tremble under her feet  
   And blossom in purple and red.

## PART II

## I

## I

'The fault was mine, the fault was mine'—  
 Why am I sitting here so stunn'd and still,  
 Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the  
   hill? —

It is this guilty hand! —  
 And there rises ever a passionate cry  
 From underneath in the darkening land —  
 What is it, that has been done?  
 O dawn of Eden bright over earth and  
   sky,  
 The fires of Hell brake out of thy rising  
   sun,  
 The fires of Hell and of Hate;  
 For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a  
   word,  
 When her brother ran in his rage to the  
   gate,

He came with the babe-faced lord;  
 Heap'd on her terms of disgrace,  
 And while she wept, and I strove to be  
   cool,

He fiercely gave me the lie,  
 Till I with as fierce an anger spoke,  
 And he struck me, madman, over the face,  
 Struck me before the languid fool,  
 Who was gaping and grinning by;  
 Struck for himself an evil stroke;  
 Wrought for his house an irredeemable  
   woe;

For front to front in an hour we stood,  
 And a million horrible bellowing echoes  
   broke  
 From the red-ribb'd hollow behind the  
   wood,  
 And thunder'd up into Heaven the Christ-  
   less code,  
 That must have life for a blow.  
 Ever and ever afresh they seem'd to grow.  
 Was it he lay there with a fading eye?  
 'The fault was mine,' he whisper'd, 'fly'  
 Then glided out of the joyous wood  
 The ghastly Wraith of one that I know:  
 And there rang on a sudden a passionate  
   cry,  
 A cry for a brother's blood:  
 It will ring in my heart and my ears, till  
   I die, till I die.

## II

Is it gone? my pulses beat —  
 What was it? a lying trick of the brain?  
 Yet I thought I saw her stand,  
 A shadow there at my feet,  
 High over the shadowy land.  
 It is gone; and the heavens fall in a gentle  
   rain,  
 When they should burst and drown with  
   deluging storms  
 The feeble vassals of wine and anger  
   and lust,  
 The little hearts that know not how to  
   forgive:  
 Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold  
   Thee just,  
 Strike dead the whole weak race of venom-  
   ous worms,  
 That sting each other here in the dust;  
 We are not worthy to live.

## II

*In Brittany*

## I

See what a lovely shell,  
 Small and pure as a pearl,  
 Lying close to my foot,  
 Frail, but a work divine,  
 Made so fairly well  
 With delicate spire and whorl,  
 How exquisitely minute,  
 A miracle of design!

## II

What is it? a learned man  
Could give it a clumsy name.  
Let him name it who can,  
The beauty would be the same.

## III

The tiny cell is forlorn,  
Void of the little living will  
That made it stir on the shore.  
Did he stand at the diamond door  
Of his house in a rainbow frill?  
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,  
A golden foot or a fairy horn  
Thro' his dim water-world?

## IV

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap  
Of my finger-nail on the sand,  
Small, but a work divine,  
Frail, but of force to withstand,  
Year upon year, the shock  
Of cataract seas that snap  
The three-decker's oaken spine  
Athwart the ledges of rock,  
Here on the Breton stran

## V

Breton, not Briton; here  
Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast  
Of ancient fable and fear —  
Plagued with a flitting to and fro,  
A disease, a hard mechanic ghost  
That never came from on high  
Nor ever arose from below,  
But only moves with the moving eye,  
Flying along the land and the main —  
Why should it look like Maud?  
Am I to be overawed  
By what I cannot but know  
Is a juggle born of the brain?

## VI

Back from the Breton coast,  
Sick of a nameless fear,  
Back to the dark sea-line  
Looking, thinking of all I have lost;  
An old song vexes my ear;  
But that of Lamech is mine.

## VII

For years, a measureless ill,  
For years, for ever, to part —  
But she, she would love me still;  
And as long, O God, as she  
Have a grain of love for me,  
So long, no doubt, no doubt,  
Shall I nurse in my dark heart,  
However weary, a spark of will  
Not to be trampled out.

## VIII

Strange, that the mind, when fraught  
With a passion so intense

One would think that it well  
Might drown all life in the eye, —  
That it should, by being so overwrought.  
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense  
For a shell, or a flower, little things  
Which else would have been past by!  
And now I remember, I,  
When he lay dying there,  
I noticed one of his many rings  
(For he had many, poor worm) and  
thought  
It is his mother's hair.

## IX

Who knows if he be dead?  
Whether I need have fled?  
Am I guilty of blood?  
However this may be,  
Comfort her, comfort her, all things good,  
While I am over the sea!  
Let me and my passionate love go by,  
But speak to her all things holy and high,  
Whatever happen to me!  
Me and my harmful love go by;  
But come to her waking, find her asleep,  
Powers of the height, Powers of the deep,  
And comfort her tho' I die.

*in full self going m.d.*

## III

Courage, poor heart of stone!  
I will not ask thee why  
Thou canst not understand  
That thou art left for ever alone:  
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone.—  
Or if I ask thee why,  
Care not thou to reply:  
She is but dead, and the time is at hand  
When thou shalt more than die.

*sadly after Maud's death*

## IV

I  
O that 'twere possible  
After long grief and pain  
To find the arms of my true love  
Round me once again!

## II

When I was wont to meet her  
In the silent woody places  
By the home that gave me birth,  
We stood tranced in long embraces  
Mixt with kisses sweeter sweeter  
Than any thing on earth.

## III

A shadow flits before me,  
Not thou, but like to thee;  
Ah Christ, that it were possible  
For one short hour to see  
The souls we loved, that they might tell us  
What and where they be.

## IV

It leads me forth at evening,  
It lightly winds and steals  
In a cold white robe before me,  
When all my spirit reels  
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,  
And the roaring of the wheels.

## V

Half the night I waste in sighs,  
Half in dreams I sorrow after  
The delight of early skies;  
In a wakeful doze I sorrow  
For the hand, the lips, the eyes,  
For the meeting of the morrow,  
The delight of happy laughter,  
The delight of low replies.

## VI

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,  
And a dewy splendour falls  
On the little flower that clings  
To the turrets and the walls;  
'Tis a morning pure and sweet,  
And the light and shadow fleet;  
She is walking in the meadow,  
And the woodland echo rings;  
In a moment we shall meet;  
She is singing in the meadow,  
And the rivulet at her feet  
Ripples on in light and shadow  
To the ballad that she sings.

## VII

Do I hear her sing as of old,  
My bird with the shining head,  
My own dove with the tender eye?  
But there rings on a sudden a passionate  
cry,  
There is some one dying or dead,  
And a sullen thunder is roll'd;  
For a tumult shakes the city,  
And I wake, my dream is fled;  
In the shuddering dawn, behold,  
Without knowledge, without pity,  
By the curtains of my bed  
That abiding phantom cold.

## VIII

Get thee hence, nor come again,  
Mix not memory with doubt,  
Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,  
Pass and cease to move about!  
'Tis the blot upon the brain  
That will show itself without:

## IX

Then I rise, the eaudrops fall,  
And the yellow vapours choke  
The great city sounding wide;  
The day comes, a dull red ball  
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke  
On the misty river-tide.

## X

Thro' the hubbub of the market  
I steal, a wasted frame,  
It crosses here, it crosses there,  
Thro' all that crowd confused and loud,  
The shadow still the same;  
And on my heavy eyelids  
My anguish hangs like shame.

## XI

Alas for her that met me,  
That heard me softly call,  
Came glimmering thro' the laurels  
At the quiet evenfall,  
In the garden by the turrets  
Of the old manorial hall.

## XII

Would the happy spirit descend,  
From the realms of light and song,  
In the chamber or the street,  
As she looks among the blest,  
Should I fear to greet my friend  
Or to say 'forgive the wrong,'  
Or to ask her, 'take me, sweet,  
To the regions of thy rest'?

## XIII

But the broad light glares and beats,  
And the shadow flits and fleets  
And will not let me be;  
And I loathe the squares and streets,  
And the faces that one meets,  
Hearts with no love for me:  
Always I long to creep  
Into some still cavern deep,  
There to weep, and weep, and weep  
My whole soul out to thee.

## V "In madhouse"

## I

Dead, long dead,  
Long dead!  
And my heart is a handful of dust,  
And the wheels go over my head,  
And my bones are shaken with pain,  
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,  
Only a yard beneath the street,  
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,  
The hoofs of the horses beat,  
Beat into my scalp and my brain,  
With never an end to the stream of passing  
feet,  
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,  
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and  
clatter,  
And here beneath it is all as bad,  
For I thought the dead had peace, but it  
is not so;  
To have no peace in the grave, is that not  
sad?

But up and down and to and fro,  
Ever about me the dead men go;  
And then to hear a dead man chatter  
Is enough to drive one mad.

## II

Wretchedest age, since Time began,  
They cannot even bury a man;  
And tho' we paid our tithes in the days  
that are gone,  
Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read;  
It is that which makes us loud in the  
world of the dead;  
There is none that does his work, not one;  
A touch of their office might have sufficed,  
But the churchmen fain would kill their  
church,  
As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

## III

See, there is one of us sobbing,  
No limit to his distress;  
And another, a lord of all things, praying  
To his own great self, as I guess;  
And another, a statesman there, betraying  
His party-secret, fool, to the press;  
And yonder a vile physician, blabbing  
The case of his patient—all for what?  
To tickle the maggot born in an empty  
head,  
And wheedle a world that loves him not,  
For it is but a world of the dead.

## IV

Nothing but idiot gabble!  
For the prophecy given of old  
And then not understood,  
Has come to pass as foretold;  
Not let any man think for the public good,  
But babble, merely for babble.  
For I never whisper'd a private affair  
Within the hearing of cat or mouse,  
No, not to myself in the closet alone,  
But I heard it shouted at once from the  
top of the house;  
Everything came to be known:  
Who told *him* we were there?

## V

Not that grey old wolf, for he came not  
back  
From the wilderness, full of wolves, where  
he used to lie;  
He has gather'd the bones for his o'er-  
grown whelp to crack;  
Crack them now for yourself, and howl,  
and die.

## VI

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,  
And curse me the British vermin, the rat;  
I know not whether he came in the Han-  
over ship,  
But I know that he lies and listens mute

In an ancient mansion's crannies and holes:  
Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,  
Except that now we poison our babes,  
poor souls!  
It is all used up for that.

## VII

Tell him now: she is standing here at my  
head;  
Not beautiful now, not even kind;  
He may take her now; for she never speaks  
her mind,  
But is ever the one thing silent here.  
She is not of us, as I divine;  
She comes from another stiller world of  
the dead,  
Stiller, not fairer than mine.

## VIII

But I know where a garden grows,  
Fairer than aught in the world beside,  
All made up of the lily and rose  
That blow by night, when the season is  
good,  
To the sound of dancing music and flutes:  
It is only flowers, they had no fruits,  
And I almost fear they are not roses, but  
blood;  
For the keeper was one, so full of pride,  
He linkt a dead man there to a spectral  
bride;  
For he, if he had not been a Sultan of  
brutes,  
Would he have that hole in his side?

## IX

But what will the old man say?  
He laid a cruel snare in a pit  
To catch a friend of mine one stormy day;  
Yet now I could even weep to think of it;  
For what will the old man say  
When he comes to the second corpse in the  
pit?

## X

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,  
Then to strike him and lay him low,  
That were a public merit, far,  
Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin;  
But the red life spilt for a private blow—  
I swear to you, lawful and lawless war  
Are scarcely even akin.

## XI

O me, why have they not buried me deep  
enough?  
Is it kind to have made me a grave so  
rough,  
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?  
Maybe still I am but half-dead;  
Then I cannot be wholly dumb;  
I will cry to the steps above my head,  
And somebody, surely, some kind heart  
will come  
To bury me, bury me  
Deeper, ever so little deeper.

## PART III

## VI

## I

My life has crept so long on a broken wing  
 Thro' cells of madness, haunts of horror  
 and fear,  
 That I come to be grateful at last for a  
 little thing:  
 My mood is changed, for it fell at a time  
 of year  
 When the face of night is fair on the  
 dewy downs,  
 And the shining daffodil dies, and the  
 Charioteer  
 And starry Gemini hang like glorious  
 crowns  
 Over Orion's grave low down in the west,  
 That like a silent lightning under the stars  
 She seem'd to divide in a dream from a  
 band of the blest,  
 And spoke of a hope for the world in the  
 coming wars—  
 'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble  
 have rest,  
 Knowing I tarry for thee,' and pointed to  
 Mars  
 As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the  
 Lion's breast.

## II

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a  
 dear delight  
 To have look'd, tho' but in a dream, upon  
 eyes so fair,  
 That had been in a weary world my one  
 thing bright;  
 And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd  
 my despair  
 When I thought that a war would arise in  
 defence of the right,  
 That an iron tyranny now should bend or  
 cease,  
 The glory of manhood stand on his an-  
 cient height,  
 Nor Britain's one sole God be the million-  
 aires:  
 No more shall commerce be all in all, and  
 Peace  
 Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,  
 And watch her harvest ripen, her herd in-  
 crease,  
 Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful  
 shore,  
 And the cobweb woven across the cannon's  
 throat  
 Shall shake its threaded tears in the wind  
 no more.

## III

And as months ran on and rumour of  
 battle grew,  
 It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,  
 said I

*"Tithonus has all, & more than all, the magic of the earliest  
 poems in the rendering of a passionate mood in a setting of  
 exquisitely natural description."*

(For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be  
 pure and true),  
 'It is time, O passionate heart and morbid  
 eye,  
 That old hysterical mock-disease should die.'  
 And I stood on a giant deck and mix'd  
 my breath  
 With a loyal people shouting a battle cry,  
 Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly  
 Far into the North, and battle, and seas of  
 death.

## IV

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher  
 aims  
 Of a land that has lost for a little her lust  
 of gold,  
 And love of a peace that was full of  
 wrongs and shames,  
 Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be  
 told;  
 And hail once more to the banner of battle  
 unroll'd!  
 Tho' many a light shall darken, and many  
 shall weep  
 For those that are crush'd in the clash of  
 jarring claims,  
 Yet God's just wrath shall be break'd on  
 a giant liar;  
 And many a darkness into the light shall  
 leap,  
 And shine in the sudden making of splen-  
 did names,  
 And noble thought be freer under the sun,  
 And the heart of a people beat with one  
 desire;  
 For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is  
 over and done,  
 And now by the side of the Black and the  
 Baltic deep,  
 And deathful-grinning mouths of the for-  
 tress, flames  
 The blood-red blossom of war with a heart  
 of fire.

## V

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down  
 like a wind,  
 We have proved we have hearts in a cause,  
 we are noble still,  
 And myself have awaked, as it seems, to  
 the better mind;  
It is better to fight for the good, than to  
 rail at the ill:  
 I have felt with my native land, I am one  
 with my kind,  
 I embrace the purpose of God, and the  
 doom assign'd.

## TITHONUS

[Published 1860.—Composed much earlier]

THE woods decay, the woods decay and  
 fall,  
 The vapors weep their burthen to the  
 ground,

Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,  
And after many a summer dies the swan.  
Me only cruel immortality  
Consumes: I wither slowly in thine arms,  
Here at the quiet limit of the world,  
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream  
The ever silent spaces of the East,  
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this grey shadow, once a man—  
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,  
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd  
To his great heart none other than a God!  
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'  
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,  
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.  
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,  
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,  
And tho' they could not end me, left me main'd  
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,  
Immortal age beside immortal youth,  
And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,  
Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,  
Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,  
Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears  
To hear me? Let me go: take back thy gift:  
Why should a man desire in any way  
To vary from the kindly race of men,  
Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance  
Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes  
A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.  
Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals  
From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,  
And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.  
Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,  
Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,  
Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team  
Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke,  
arise,  
And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,  
And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful  
In silence, then before thine answer given  
Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,  
And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,  
In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?  
'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart  
In days far-off, and with what other eyes  
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—  
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw  
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;  
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt  
my blood  
Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all  
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,  
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm  
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds  
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd  
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,  
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,  
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East:  
How can my nature longer mix with thine?  
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold  
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet  
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when  
the steam  
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes  
Of happy men that have the power to die,  
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.  
Release me, and restore me to the ground;  
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave:  
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn;  
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,  
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

#### IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

[Composed 1861 — Published 1864.]

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest white,  
Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,  
All along the valley, where thy waters flow,  
I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.  
All along the valley while I walk'd to-day,  
The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;

For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed  
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,  
 And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,  
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

## THE SAILOR BOY

[1861]

HE rose at dawn and, fired with hope,  
 Shot o'er the seething harbour-bar,  
 And reach'd the ship and caught the rope,  
 And whistled to the morning star.

And while he whistled long and loud  
 He heard a fierce mermaiden cry,  
 'O boy, tho' thou art young and proud,  
 I see the place where thou wilt lie.'

'The sands and yeasty surges mix  
 In caves about the dreary bay,  
 And on thy ribs the limpet sticks,  
 And in thy heart the scrawl shall play.'

'Fool,' he answer'd, 'death is sure  
 To those that stay and those that roam,  
 But I will nevermore endure  
 To sit with empty hands at home.'

'My mother clings about my neck,  
 My sisters crying, "Stay for shame;"  
 My father raves of death and wreck,—  
 They are all to blame, they are all to blame.'

'God help me! save I take my part  
 Of danger on the roaring sea,  
 A devil rises in my heart,  
 Far worse than any death to me.'

MILTON *classical metre*  
*Alcaics*  
 [1864]

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,  
 O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,  
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,  
 Milton, a name to resound for ages;  
 Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,  
 Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,  
 Tower, as the deep-domed empyrēan  
 Rings to the roar of an angel onset—  
 Me rather all that bowery loneliness,  
 The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,  
 And bloom profuse and cedar arches  
 Charm as a wanderer out in ocean,  
 Where some resplendent sunset of India  
 Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,  
 And crimson-hued the stately palmwoods  
 Whisper in odorous heights of even.

*At a distance goes music, tetanus  
 Public & P. Inst.  
 2nd guess scene of Eden.*

## THE VOYAGE

[1864]

WE left behind the painted buoy  
 That tosses at the harbour-mouth;  
 And madly danced our hearts with joy,  
 As fast we fleeted to the South:  
 How fresh was every sight and sound  
 On open main or winding shore!  
 We knew the merry world was round,  
 And we might sail for evermore.

Warm broke the breeze against the brow,  
 Dry sang the tackle, sang the sail:  
 The Lady's head upon the prow  
 Caught the shrill salt, and sheer'd the gale.  
 The broad seas swell'd to meet the keel,  
 And swept behind: so quick the run,  
 We felt the good ship shake and reel,  
 We seem'd to sail into the Sun!

How oft we saw the Sun retire,  
 And burn the threshold of the night,  
 Fall from his Ocean-lane of fire,  
 And sleep beneath his pillar'd light!  
 How oft the purple-skirted robe  
 Of twilight slowly downward drawn,  
 As thro' the slumber of the globe  
 Again we dash'd into the dawn!

New stars all night above the brim  
 Of waters lighten'd into view;  
 They climb'd as quickly, for the rim  
 Changed every moment as we flew.  
 Far ran the naked moon across  
 The houseless ocean's heaving field,  
 Or flying shone, the silver boss  
 Of her own halo's dusky shield;

The peaky islet shifted shapes,  
 High towns on hills were dimly seen,  
 We past long lines of Northern capes  
 And dewy Northern meadows green.  
 We came to warmer waves, and deep  
 Across the boundless east we drove,  
 Where those long swells of breaker sweep  
 The nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.

By peaks that flamed, or, all in shade,  
 Gloom'd the low coast and quivering brine  
 With ashy rains, that spreading made  
 Fantastic plume or sable pine;  
 By sands and steaming flats, and floods  
 Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast,  
 And hills and scarlet-mingled woods  
 Glow'd for a moment as we past.

O hundred shores of happy climes,  
 How swiftly stream'd ye by the bark!  
 At times the whole sea burn'd, at times  
 With wakes of fire, we tore the dark;

At times a carven craft would shoot  
From havens hid in fairy bowers,  
With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,  
But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.

For one fair Vision ever fled  
Down the waste waters day and night,  
And still we follow'd where she led,  
In hope to gain upon her flight.  
Her face was evermore unseen,  
And fixt upon the far sea-line;  
But each man murmur'd 'O my Queen,  
I follow till I make thee mine.'

And now we lost her, now she gleam'd  
Like Fancy made of golden air,  
Now nearer to the prow she seem'd  
Like Virtue firm, like Knowledge fair,  
Now high on waves that idly burst  
Like Heavenly Hope she crown'd the sea,  
And now, the bloodless point reversed,  
She bore the blade of Liberty.

And only one among us — him  
We pleased not — he was seldom pleased:  
He saw not far: his eyes were dim:  
But ours he swore were all diseased.  
'A ship of fools' he shriek'd in spite,  
'A ship of fools' he sneer'd and wept.  
And overboard one stormy night  
He cast his body, and on we swept.

And never sail of ours was furl'd,  
Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn;  
We loved the glories of the world,  
But laws of nature were our scorn;  
For blasts would rise and rave and cease,  
But whence were those that drove the  
sail  
Across the whirlwind's heart of peace,  
And to and thro' the counter-gale?

Again to colder climes we came,  
For still we follow'd where she led:  
Now mate is blind and captain lame,  
And half the crew are sick or dead.  
But blind or lame or sick or sound  
We follow that which flies before:  
We know the merry world is round,  
And we may sail for evermore.

### THE FLOWER

[1864]

ONCE in a golden hour  
I cast to earth a seed.  
Up there came a flower,  
The people said, a weed,

To and fro they went  
Thro' my garden-bower,  
And muttering discontent  
Cursed me and my flower.

Then it grew so tall  
It wore a crown of light,  
But thieves from o'er the wall  
Stole the seed by night.

Sow'd it far and wide  
By every town and tower,  
Till all the people cried  
'Splendid is the flower.'

Read my little fable:  
He that runs may read.  
Most can raise the flowers now,  
For all have got the seed.

And some are pretty enough,  
And some are poor indeed;  
And now again the people  
Call it but a weed.

*Handwritten signature*  
ENOCH ARDEN

[1864]

LONG lines of cliff breaking have left a  
chasm;  
And in the chasm are foam and yellow  
sands;  
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow wharf  
In cluster; then a moulder'd church; and  
higher  
A long street climbs to one tall-tower'd  
mill;  
And high in heaven behind it a grey down  
With Danish barrows; and a hazelwood,  
By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes  
Green in a cuplike hollow of the down.

Here on this beach a hundred years ago,  
Three children of three houses, Annie Lee,  
The prettiest little damsel in the port,  
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,  
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's lad  
Made orphan by a winter shipwreck, play'd  
Among the waste and lumber of the shore,  
Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-  
nets,  
Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats updrawn;  
And built their castles of dissolving sand  
To watch them overflow'd, or following up  
And flying the white breaker, daily left  
The little footprint daily wash'd away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff;  
In this the children play'd at keeping house.  
Enoch was host one day, Philip the next,  
While Annie still was mistress; but at  
times  
Enoch would hold possession for a week:  
'This is my house and this my little wife.'  
'Mine too,' said Philip 'turn and turn  
about.'  
When, if they quarrell'd, Enoch stronger-  
made

Was master: then would Philip, his blue eyes  
All flooded with the helpless wrath of tears,  
Shriek out 'I hate you, Enoch,' and at this  
The little wife would weep for company,  
And pray them not to quarrel for her sake,  
And say she would be little wife to both.

But when the dawn of rosy childhood past,  
And the new warmth of life's ascending sun

Was felt by either, either fixt his heart  
On that one girl; and Enoch spoke his love,  
But Philip loved in silence; and the girl  
Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to him;  
But she loved Enoch; tho' she knew it not,

And would if ask'd deny it. Enoch set  
A purpose evermore before his eyes,  
To hoard all savings to the uttermost,  
To purchase his own boat, and make a home

For Annie: and so prosper'd that at last  
A luckier or a bolder fisherman,  
A carefuller in peril, did not breathe.  
For leagues along that breaker-beaten coast

Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a year  
On board a merchantman, and made himself

Full sailor; and he thrice had pluck'd a life

From the dread sweep of the down-streaming seas:

And all men look'd upon him favourably:  
And ere he touch'd his one-and-twentieth

May

He purchased his own boat, and made a home

For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway up  
The narrow street that clamber'd toward the mill.

Then, on a golden autumn eventide,  
The younger people making holiday,  
With bag and sack and basket, great and small,

Went nutting to the hazels. Philip stay'd  
(His father lying sick and needing him)  
An hour behind; but as he climb'd the hill,  
Just where the prone edge of the wood began

To feather toward the hollow, saw the pair,  
Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,  
His large grey eyes and weather-beaten face

All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,  
That burn'd as on an altar. Philip look'd,  
And in their eyes and faces read his doom;  
Then, as their faces drew together, groan'd,  
And slipt aside, and like a wounded life

Crept down into the hollows of the wood;  
There, while the rest were loud in merry-making,  
Had his dark hour unseen, and rose and past  
Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang the bells,  
And merrily ran the years, seven happy years,  
Seven happy years of health and competence,  
And mutual love and honourable toil;  
With children; first a daughter. In him woke,  
With his first babe's first cry, the noble wish

To save all earnings to the uttermost,  
And give his child a better bringing-up  
Than his had been, or hers; a wish renew'd,  
When two years after came a boy to be  
The rosy idol of her solitudes,  
While Enoch was abroad on wrathful seas,  
Or often journeying landward; for in truth  
Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's ocean-spoil

In ocean-smelling osier, and his face,  
Rough-redden'd with a thousand winter gales,

Not only to the market-cross were known,  
But in the leafy lanes behind the down,  
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,  
And peacock-yewtree of the lonely Hall,  
Whose Friday fare was Enoch's ministering.

Then came a change, as all things human change.

Ten miles to northward of the narrow port  
Open'd a larger haven: thither used  
Enoch at times to go by land or sea;  
And once when there, and clambering on  
a mast

In harbour, by mischance he slipt and fell:  
A limb was broken when they lifted him;  
And while he lay recovering there, his wife

Bore him another son, a sickly one:  
Another hand crept too across his trade  
Taking her bread and theirs: and on him fell,

Altho' a grave and staid God-fearing man,  
Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and gloom.  
He seem'd, as in a nightmare of the night,  
To see his children leading evermore  
Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,  
And her, he loved, a beggar: then he pray'd

'Save them from this, whatever comes to me.'

And while he pray'd, the master of that ship  
Enoch had served in, hearing his mischance,

Came, for he knew the man and valued him,  
Reporting of his vessel China-bound,  
And wanting yet a boatswain. Would he go?

There yet were many weeks before she sail'd,  
Sail'd from this port. Would Enoch have the place?  
And Enoch all at once assented to it,  
Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.

So now that shadow of mischance appear'd  
No graver than as when some little cloud  
Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,  
And isles a light in the offing: yet the wife —

When he was gone — the children — what to do?

Then Enoch lay long-pondering on his plans;

To sell the boat — and yet he loved her well —

How many a rough sea had he weather'd in her!

He knew her, as a horseman knows his horse —

And yet to sell her — then with what she brought

Buy goods and stores — set Annie forth in trade

With all that seamen needed or their wives —

So might she keep the house while he was gone.

Should he not trade himself out yonder? go

This voyage more than once? yea twice or thrice —

As oft as needed — last, returning rich,  
Become the master of a larger craft,  
With fuller profits lead an easier life,  
Have all his pretty young ones educated.  
And pass his days in peace among his own.

Thus Enoch in his heart determined all:  
Then moving homeward came on Annie pale,

Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-born.  
Forward she started with a happy cry,  
And laid the feeble infant in his arms;  
Whom Enoch took, and handled all his limbs,

Appraised his weight and fondled father-like,

But had no heart to break his purposes  
To Annie, till the morrow, when he spoke.

Then first since Enoch's golden ring had girt

Her finger, Annie fought against his will:  
Yet not with brawling opposition she,  
But manifold entreaties, many a tear,

Many a sad kiss by day by night renew'd  
(Sure that all evil would come out of it)  
Besought him, supplicating, if he cared  
For her or his dear children, not to go.  
He not for his own self caring but her,  
Her and her children, let her plead in vain;  
So grieving held his will, and bore it thro'.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-friend,  
Bought Annie goods and stores, and set his hand

To fit their little streetward sitting-room  
With shelf and corner for the goods and stores.

So all day long till Enoch's last at home,  
Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer and axe,

Auger and saw, while Annie seem'd to hear  
Her own death-scaffold raising, shrill'd and rang,

Till this was ended, and his careful hand, —  
The space was narrow, — having order'd all  
Almost as neat and close as Nature packs  
Her blossom or her seedling, paused; and he,  
Who needs would work for Annie to the last,

Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of fare-well

Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's fears,  
Save, as his Annie's, were a laughter to him.

Yet Enoch as a brave God-fearing man  
Bow'd himself down, and in that mystery  
Where God-in-man is one with man-in-God,

Pray'd for a blessing on his wife and babes

Whatever came to him: and then he said:  
'Annie, this voyage by the grace of God  
Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.  
Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire for me,

For I'll be back, my girl, before you know it.'

Then lightly rocking baby's cradle 'and he,  
This pretty, puny, weakly little one, —  
Nay — for I love him all the better for it —  
God bless him, he shall sit upon my knees  
And I will tell him tales of foreign parts,  
And make him merry, when I come home again.

Come Annie, come, cheer up before I go.'

Him running on thus hopefully she heard,  
And almost hoped herself; but when he turn'd

The current of his talk to graver things  
In sailor fashion roughly sermonizing

On providence and trust in Heaven, she heard,  
Heard and not heard him; as the village girl,  
Who sets her pitcher underneath the spring,  
Musing on him that used to fill it for her,  
Hears and not hears; and lets it overflow.

At length she spoke 'O Enoch, you are wise;  
And yet for all your wisdom well know I  
That I shall look upon your face no more.'

'Well then,' said Enoch, 'I shall look on yours.  
Annie, the ship I sail in passes here  
(He named the day); get you a seaman's glass,  
Spy out my face, and laugh at all your fears.'

But when the last of those last moments came,  
'Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,  
Look to the babes, and till I come again,  
Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.  
And fear no more for me; or if you fear  
Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds.  
Is He not yonder in those uttermost  
Parts of the morning? if I flee to these  
Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,  
The sea is His: He made it.'

Enoch rose,  
Cast his strong arms about his drooping wife,  
And kiss'd his wonder-stricken little ones;  
But for the third, the sickly one, who slept  
After a night of feverous wakefulness,  
When Annie would have raised him Enoch said  
'Wake him not; let him sleep; how should  
the child  
Remember this?' and kiss'd him in his cot.  
But Annie from her baby's forehead clipt  
A tiny curl, and gave it: this he kept  
Thro' all his future; but now hastily caught  
His bundle, waved his hand, and went his way.

She when the day, that Enoch mention'd, came,  
Borrow'd a glass, but all in vain: perhaps  
She could not fix the glass to suit her eye;  
Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous;  
She saw him not: and while he stood on deck  
Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail  
She watch'd it, and departed weeping for him;  
Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his grave,

Set her sad will no less to chime with his,  
But threwe not in her trade, not being bred  
To barter, nor compensating the want  
By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,  
Nor asking overmuch and taking less,  
And still foreboding 'what would Enoch say?'

For more than once, in days of difficulty  
And pressure, had she sold her wares for less  
Than what she gave in buying what she sold:  
She fail'd and sadden'd knowing it; and thus,  
Expectant of that news which never came,  
Gain'd for her own a scanty sustenance,  
And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born and grew  
Yet sicklier, tho' the mother cared for it  
With all a mother's care: nevertheless,  
Whether her business often call'd her from it,  
Or thro' the want of what it needed most.  
Or means to pay the voice who best could tell  
What most it needed — howsoe'er it was,  
After a lingering, — ere she was aware, —  
Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,  
The little innocent soul flitted away.

In that same week when Annie buried it,  
Philip's true heart, which hunger'd for her peace  
(Since Enoch left he had not look'd upon her),  
Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.  
'Surely' said Philip 'I may see her now,  
May be some little comfort;' therefore went,

Past thro' the solitary room in front,  
Paused for a moment at an inner door,  
Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,  
Enter'd; but Annie, seated with her grief,  
Fresh from the burial of her little one,  
Cared not to look on any human face,  
But turn'd her own toward the wall and wept.

Then Philip standing up said falteringly  
'Annie, I came to ask a favour of you.'

He spoke; the passion in her moan'd reply,  
'Favour from one so sad and so forlorn  
As I am!' half abash'd him; yet unask'd,  
His bashfulness and tenderness at war,  
He set himself beside her, saying to her:

'I came to speak to you of what he wish'd,  
Enoch, your husband: I have ever said  
You chose the best among us—a strong man:

For where he fixt his heart he set his hand  
To do the thing he will'd, and bore it thro'.  
And wherefore did he go this weary way,  
And leave you lonely? not to see the  
world —  
For pleasure? — nay, but for the where-  
withal  
To give his babes a better bringing-up  
Than his had been, or yours: that was his  
wish.  
And if he come again, vext will he be  
To find the precious morning hours were  
lost.  
And it would vex him even in his grave,  
If he could know his babes were running  
wild  
Like colts about the waste. So, Annie,  
now —  
Have we not known each other all our  
lives?  
I do beseech you by the love you bear  
Him and his children not to say me nay —  
For, if you will, when Enoch comes again  
Why then he shall repay me — if you will,  
Annie — for I am rich and well-to-do.  
Now let me put the boy and girl to school:  
This is the favour that I came to ask.'

Then Annie with her brows against the  
wall  
Answer'd 'I cannot look you in the face;  
I seem so foolish and so broken down.  
When you came in my sorrow broke me  
down;  
And now I think your kindness breaks me  
down;  
But Enoch lives; that is borne in on me:  
He will repay you: money can be repaid;  
Not kindness such as yours.'

And Philip ask'd  
'Then you will let me, Annie?'

There she turn'd.  
She rose, and fixt her swimming eyes upon  
him,  
And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,  
Then calling down a blessing on his head  
Caught at his hand, and wrung it passion-  
ately,  
And past into the little garth beyond.  
So lifted up in spirit he moved away.

Then Philip put the boy and girl to  
school,  
And bought them needful books, and every-  
way,  
Like one who does his duty by his own,  
Made himself theirs; and tho' for Annie's  
sake,  
Fearing the lazy gossip of the port,  
He oft denied his heart his dearest wish,  
And seldom crost her threshold, yet he  
sent

Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and  
fruit,  
The late and early roses from his wall,  
Or conies from the down, and now and  
then,  
With some pretext of fineness in the meal  
To save the offence of charitable, flour  
From his tall mill that whistled on the  
waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's mind:  
Scarce could the woman when he came  
upon her,  
Out of full heart and boundless gratitude  
Light on a broken word to thank him with.  
But Philip was her children's all-in-all;  
From distant corners of the street they ran  
To greet his hearty welcome heartily;  
Lords of his house and of his mill were  
they;  
Worried his passive ear with petty wrongs  
Or pleasures, hung upon him, play'd with  
him  
And call'd him Father Philip. Philip gain'd  
As Enoch lost; for Enoch seem'd to them  
Uncertain as a vision or a dream,  
Faint as a figure seen in early dawn  
Down at the far end of an avenue,  
Going we know not where: and so ten  
years,  
Since Enoch left his hearth and native  
land,  
Fled forward, and no news of Enoch came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children  
long'd  
To go with others, nutting to the wood,  
And Annie would go with them; then they  
begg'd  
For Father Philip (as they call'd him) too:  
Him, like the working bee in blossom-  
dust,  
Blanch'd with his mill, they found; and  
saying to him  
'Come with us, Father Philip', he denied;  
But when the children pluck'd at him to  
go,  
He laugh'd, and yielded readily to their  
wish,  
For was not Annie with them? and they  
went.

But after scaling half the weary down,  
Just where the prone edge of the wood  
began  
To feather toward the hollow, all her force  
Fail'd her; and sighing, 'Let me rest' she  
said:  
So Philip rested with her well-content;  
While all the younger ones with jubilant  
cries  
Broke from their elders, and tumultuously  
Down thro' the whitening hazels made a  
plunge

To the bottom, and dispersed, and bent or  
broke  
The lithe reluctant boughs to tear away  
Their tawny clusters, crying to each other  
And calling, here and there, about the  
wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot  
Her presence, and remember'd one dark  
hour

Here in this wood, when like a wounded life  
He crept into the shadow: at last he said,  
Lifting his honest forehead, 'Listen, Annie,  
How merry they are down yonder in the  
wood.'

Tired, Annie?' for she did not speak a  
word.

'Tired?' but her face had fall'n upon her  
hands;

At which, as with a kind of anger in him,  
'The ship was lost' he said, 'the ship was  
lost!'

No more of that! why should you kill your-  
self

And make them orphans quite?' And  
Annie said

'I thought not of it: but—I know not  
why—

Their voices make me feel so solitary.'

Then Philip coming somewhat closer  
spoke.

'Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,  
And it has been upon my mind so long,  
That tho' I know not when it first came  
there,

I know that it will out at last. O Annie,  
It is beyond all hope, against all chance,  
That he who left you ten long years ago  
Should still be living; well then—let me  
speak:

I grieve to see you poor and wanting help:  
I cannot help you as I wish to do  
Unless—they say that women are so  
quick—

Perhaps you know what I would have you  
know—

I wish you for my wife. I fain would  
prove

A father to your children: I do think  
They love me as a father: I am sure  
That I love them as if they were mine  
own;

And I believe, if you were fast my wife,  
That after all these sad uncertain years,  
We might be still as happy as God grants  
To any of His creatures. Think upon it:  
For I am well-to-do—no kin, no care,  
No burthen, save my care for you and  
yours:

And we have known each other all our  
lives,

And I have loved you longer than you  
know.'

Then answer'd Annie; tenderly she  
spoke:

'You have been as God's good angel in our  
house.

God bless you for it, God reward you  
for it,

Philip, with something happier than myself.  
Can one love twice? can you be ever loved  
As Enoch was? what is it that you ask?  
'I am content' he answer'd 'to be loved  
A little after Enoch.' 'O' she cried,  
Scared as it were, 'dear Philip, wait a  
while:

If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not  
come—

Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:

Surely I shall be wiser in a year:

O wait a little!' Philip sadly said

'Annie, as I have waited all my life  
I well may wait a little.' 'Nay' she cried  
'I am bound: you have my promise—in a  
year:

Will you not bide your year as I bide  
mine?'

And Philip answer'd 'I will bide my year.'

Here both were mute, till Philip glancing  
up

Beheld the dead flame of the fallen day  
Pass from the Danish barrow overhead;  
Then fearing night and chill for Annie,  
rose

And sent his voice beneath him thro' the  
wood.

Up came the children laden with their  
spoil;

Then all descended to the port, and there  
At Annie's door he paused and gave his  
hand,

Saying gently 'Annie, when I spoke to you,  
That was your hour of weakness. I was  
wrong.'

I am always bound to you, but you are  
free.'

Then Annie weeping answer'd 'I am bound.'

She spoke; and in one moment as it  
were,

While yet she went about her household  
ways,

Ev'n as she dwelt upon his latest words,  
That he had loved her longer than she  
knew,

That autumn into autumn flash'd again,  
And there he stood once more before her  
face,

Claiming her promise. 'Is it a year?' she  
ask'd.

'Yes, if the nuts' he said 'be ripe again:  
Come out and see.' But she—she put  
him off—

So much to look to—such a change—a  
month—

Give her a month—she knew that she was bound—  
A month—no more. Then Philip with his eyes  
Full of that lifelong hunger, and his voice  
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,  
'Take your own time, Annie, take your own time.'  
And Annie could have wept for pity of him;  
And yet she held him on delayingly  
With many a scarce-believable excuse,  
Trying his truth and his long-sufferance,  
Till half-another year had slipt away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,  
Abhorrent of a calculation crost,  
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.  
Some thought that Philip did but trifle with her;  
Some that she but held off to draw him on;  
And others laugh'd at her and Philip too,  
As simple folk that knew not their own minds;  
And one, in whom all evil fancies clung  
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly  
Would hint at worse in either. Her own son  
Was silent, tho' he often look'd his wish;  
But evermore the daughter prest upon her  
To wed the man so dear to all of them  
And lift the household out of poverty;  
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew  
Careworn and wan; and all these things fell on her  
Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced  
That Annie could not sleep, but earnestly  
Pray'd for a sign 'my Enoch, is he gone?'  
Then compass'd round by the blind wall of night  
Brook'd not the expectant terror of her heart,  
Started from bed, and struck herself a light,  
Then desperately seized the holy Book,  
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,  
Suddenly put her finger on the text,  
'Under a palmtree.' That was nothing to her:  
No meaning there: she closed the Book and slept:  
When lo! her Enoch sitting on a height,  
Under a palmtree, over him the Sun:  
'He is gone,' she thought, 'he is happy, he is singing'  
Hosanna in the highest: yonder shines  
The Sun of Righteousness, and these be palms  
Whereof the happy people strowing cried  
'Hosanna in the highest!' Here she woke,

Resolved, sent for him and said wildly to him  
'There is no reason why we should not wed.'  
'Then for God's sake,' he answer'd, 'both our sakes,  
So you will wed me, let it be at once.'

So these were wed and merrily rang the bells,  
Merrily rang the bells and they were wed.  
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.  
A footstep seem'd to fall beside her path.  
She knew not whence; a whisper on her ear,  
She knew not what; nor loved she to be left  
Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.  
What ail'd her then, that ere she enter'd often  
Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the latch,  
Fearing to enter: Philip thought he knew:  
Such doubts and fears were common to her state,  
Being with child: but when her child was born,  
Then her new child was as herselv renew'd,  
Then the new mother came about her heart,  
Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,  
And that mysterious instinct wholly died.

And where was Enoch? prosperously sail'd  
The ship 'Good Fortune,' tho' at setting forth  
The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward, shook  
And almost overwhelm'd her, yet unvext  
She slipt across the summer of the world,  
Then after a long tumble about the Cape  
And frequent interchange of foul and fair,  
She passing thro' the summer world again,  
The breath of heaven came continually  
And sent her sweetly by the golden isles,  
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and bought  
Quaint monsters for the market of those times,  
A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.

Less lucky her home-voyage: at first indeed  
Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by day,  
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-head  
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from her bows:  
Then follow'd calms, and then winds variable,  
Then baffling, a long course of them; and last  
Storm, such as drove her under moonless  
heavens  
Till hard upon the cry of 'breakers' came

The crash of ruin, and the loss of all  
But Enoch and two others. Half the night,  
Buoy'd upon floating tackle and broken  
spars,  
These drifted, stranding on an isle at morn  
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,  
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing  
roots;  
Nor save for pity was it hard to take  
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.  
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge  
They built, and thatch'd with leaves of  
palm, a hut,  
Half hut, half native cavern. So the three,  
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,  
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than  
boy,  
Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and  
wreck,  
Lay lingering out a three-years' death-in-  
life.  
They could not leave him. After he was  
gone,  
The two remaining found a fallen stem;  
And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,  
Fire-hollowing this in Indian fashion, fell  
Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.  
In those two deaths he read God's warning  
'wait.'

The mountain wooded to the peak, the  
lawns  
And winding glades high up like ways to  
Heaven,  
The slender coco's drooping crown of  
plumes,  
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,  
The lustre of the long convolvulus  
That coil'd around the stately stems, and  
ran

Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows  
And glories of the broad belt of the world,  
All these he saw; but what he fain had  
seen

He could not see, the kindly human face,  
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard  
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,  
The league-long roller thundering on the  
reef,

The moving whisper of huge trees that  
branch'd

And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep  
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,  
As down the shore he ranged, or all day  
long

Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,  
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:  
No sail from day to day, but every day  
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts  
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;  
The blaze upon the waters to the east;

The blaze upon his island overhead;  
The blaze upon the waters to the west;  
Then the great stars that globed themselves  
in Heaven,  
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again  
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

There often as he watch'd or seem'd to  
watch,  
So still, the golden lizard on him paused,  
A phantom made of many phantoms moved  
Before him haunting him, or he himself  
Moved haunting people, things and places,  
known  
Far in a darker isle beyond the line;  
The babes, their babble, Annie, the small  
house,  
The climbing street, the mill, the leafy  
lanes,  
The peacock-yewtree and the lonely Hall,  
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the  
chill  
November dawns and dewy-glooming  
downs,  
The gentle shower, the smell of dying  
leaves,  
And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his ears,  
Tho' faintly, merrily—far and far away—  
He heard the pealing of his parish bells;  
Then, tho' he knew not wherefore, started  
up  
Shuddering, and when the beauteous hate-  
ful isle  
Return'd upon him, had not his poor heart  
Spoken with That, which being everywhere  
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all  
alone,  
Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head  
The sunny and rainy seasons came and  
went  
Year after year. His hopes to see his own,  
And pace the sacred old familiar fields,  
Not yet had perish'd, when his lonely doom  
Came suddenly to an end. Another ship  
(She wanted water) blown by baffling  
winds,  
Like the Good Fortune, from her destined  
course,  
Stay'd by this isle, not knowing where she  
lay:

For since the mate had seen at early dawn  
Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle  
The silent water slipping from the hills,  
They sent a crew that landing burst away  
In search of stream or fount, and fill'd the  
shores

With clamour. Downward from his moun-  
tain gorge  
Stept the long-hair'd long-bearded solitary,  
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely  
clad,

Muttering and mumbling, idiotlike it seem'd,  
With inarticulate rage, and making signs  
They knew not what: and yet he led the way  
To where the rivulets of sweet water ran;  
And ever as he mingled with the crew,  
And heard them talking, his long-bounden tongue  
Was loosen'd, till he made them understand;  
Whom, when their casks were fill'd they took aboard:  
And there the tale he utter'd brokenly,  
Scarce credited at first but more and more,  
Amazed and melted all who listen'd to it;  
And clothes they gave him and free passage home;  
But oft he work'd among the rest and shook  
His isolation from him. None of these  
Came from his county, or could answer him,  
If question'd, aught of what he cared to know.  
And dull the voyage was with long delays,  
The vessel scarce sea-worthy; but evermore  
His fancy fled before the lazy wind  
Returning, till beneath a clouded moon  
He like a lover down thro' all his blood  
Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-breath  
Of England, blown across her ghostly wall:  
And that same morning officers and men  
Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,  
Pitying the lonely man, and gave him it:  
Then moving up the coast they landed him,  
Ev'n in that harbour whence he sail'd before.

There Enoch spoke no word to any one,  
But homeward—home—what home? had he a home?  
His home, he walk'd. Bright was that afternoon,  
Sunny but chill; till drawn thro' either chasm,  
Where either haven open'd on the deeps,  
Roll'd a sea-haze and whelm'd the world in grey;  
Cut off the length of highway on before,  
And left but narrow breadth to left and right  
Of wither'd holt or tilth or pasturage.  
On the nigh-naked tree the Robin piped  
Disconsolate, and thro' the dripping haze  
The dead weight of the dead leaf bore it down:  
Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the gloom;  
Last, as it seem'd, a great mist-blotted light  
Flared on him, and he came upon the place.

Then down the long street having slow y stolen,  
His heart foreshadowing all calamity,  
His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd the home  
Where Annie lived and loved him, and his babes  
In those far-off seven happy years were born;  
But finding neither light nor murmur there  
(A bill of sale gleam'd thro' the drizzle) crept  
Still downward thinking 'dead or dead to me!'  
Down to the pool and narrow wharf he went,  
Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,  
A front of timber-crost antiquity,  
So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old,  
He thought it must have gone; but he was gone  
Who kept it; and his widow, Miriam Lane,  
With daily-dwindling profits held the house;  
A haunt of brawling seamen once, but now  
Stiller, with yet a bed for wandering men.  
There Enoch rested silent many days.

But Miriam Lane was good and garrulous,  
Nor let him be, but often breaking in,  
Told him, with other annals of the port.  
Not knowing—Enoch was so brown, so bow'd,  
So broken—all the story of his house.  
His baby's death, her growing poverty,  
How Philip put her little ones to school,  
And kept them in it, his long wooing her,  
Her slow consent, and marriage, and the birth  
Of Philip's child: and o'er his countenance  
No shadow past, nor motion: any one,  
Regarding, well had deem'd he felt the tale  
Less than the teller: only when she closed,  
'Enoch, poor man, was cast away and lost,'  
He, shaking his grey head pathetically,  
Repeated muttering 'cast away and lost;'  
Again in deeper inward whispers 'lost!'

But Enoch yearn'd to see her face again;  
'If I might look on her sweet face again  
And know that she is happy.' So the thought  
Haunted and harass'd him, and drove him forth,  
At evening when the dull November day  
Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.  
There he sat down gazing on all below;  
There did a thousand memories roll upon him,  
Unspeakable for sadness. By and by

The ruddy square of comfortable light,  
Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's house,  
Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures  
The bird of passage, till he madly strikes  
Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the street,  
The latest house to landward; but behind,  
With one small gate that open'd on the waste,  
Flourish'd a little garden square and wall'd:  
And in it thrave an ancient evergreen,  
A yewtree, and all round it ran a walk  
Of shingle, and a walk divided it:  
But Enoch shunn'd the middle walk and stole  
Up by the wall, behind the yew; and thence  
That which he better might have shunn'd,  
if grieves  
Like his have worse or better, Enoch saw.

For cups and silver on the burnish'd board  
Sparkled and shone; so genial was the hearth:  
And on the right hand of the hearth he saw  
Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,  
Stout, rosy, with his babe across his knees;  
And o'er her second father stoopt a girl,  
A later but a loftier Annie Lee,  
Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her lifted hand  
Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring  
To tempt the babe, who rear'd his creasy arms,  
Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they laugh'd:  
And on the left hand of the hearth he saw  
The mother glancing often toward her babe,  
But turning now and then to speak with him,  
Her son, who stood beside her tall and strong,  
And saying that which pleased him, for he smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life beheld  
His wife his wife no more, and saw the babe  
Hers, yet not his, upon the father's knee,  
And all the warmth, the peace, the happiness,  
And his own children tall and beautiful,  
And him, that other, reigning in his place,  
Lord of his rights and of his children's love,—

Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told him all,  
Because things seen are mightier than things heard,  
Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch, and fear'd  
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,  
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,  
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,  
Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot,  
And feeling all along the garden-wall,  
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be found,  
Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and closed,  
As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,  
Behind him, and came out upon the waste.

And there he would have knelt, but that his knees  
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug His fingers into the wet earth, and pray'd.

'Too hard to bear! why did they take me thence?  
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,  
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness  
A little longer! aid me, give me strength  
Not to tell her, never to let her know.  
Help me not to break in upon her peace.  
My children too! must I not speak to these?  
They know me not. I should betray myself.

Never: no father's kiss for me—the girl So like her mother, and the boy, my son.'

There speech and thought and nature fail'd a little,  
And he lay tranced; but when he rose and paced  
Back toward his solitary home again,  
All down the long and narrow street he went  
Beating it in upon his weary brain,  
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,  
'Not to tell her, never to let her know.'

He was not all unhappy. His resolve  
Upbore him, and firm faith, and evermore  
Prayer from a living source within the will,  
And beating up thro' all the bitter world,  
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,  
Kept him a living soul. 'This miller's wife'  
He said to Miriam 'that you told me of,  
Has she no fear that her first husband lives?'

'Aye, aye, poor soul' said Miriam, 'fear now!  
 If you could tell her you had seen him dead,  
 Why, that would be her comfort,' and he thought  
 'After the Lord has call'd me she shall know,  
 I wait His time,' and Enoch set himself, Scorning an alms, to work whereby to live.  
 Almost to all things could he turn his hand.  
 Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or help'd  
 At lading and unlading the tall barks, That brought the stinted commerce of those days;  
 Thus earn'd a scanty living for himself; Yet since he did but labour for himself, Work without hope, there was not life in it Whereby the man could live; and as the year  
 Roll'd itself round again to meet the day When Enoch had return'd, a languor came Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually Weakening the man, till he could do no more,  
 But kept the house, his chair, and last his bed.  
 And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully. For sure no gladlier does the stranded wreck  
 See thro' the grey skirts of a lifting squall The boat that bears the hope of life approach  
 To save the life despair'd of, than he saw Death dawning on him, and the close of all.  
 For thro' that dawning gleam'd a kindlier hope  
 On Enoch thinking, 'after I am gone, Then may she learn I loved her to the last.' He call'd aloud for Miriam Lane and said, 'Woman, I have a secret—only swear, Before I tell you—swear upon the book Not to reveal it, till you see me dead.' 'Dead' clamour'd the good woman, 'hear him talk!  
 I warrant, man, that we shall bring you round.'  
 'Swear' added Enoch sternly 'on the book.' And on the book, half-frighted, Miriam swore.  
 Then Enoch rolling his grey eyes upon her, 'Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?' 'Know him?' she said, 'I knew him far away.  
 Aye, aye, I mind him coming down the street;  
 Held his head high, and cared for no man, he.'  
 Slowly and sadly Enoch answer'd her:

'His head is low, and no man cares for him.  
 I think I have not three days more to live; I am the man.' At which the woman gave A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry. 'You Arden, you! nay,—sure he was a foot Higher than you be.' Enoch said again, 'My God has bow'd me down to what I am;  
 My grief and solitude have broken me; Nevertheless, know you that I am he Who married—but that name has twice been changed—  
 I married her who married Philip Ray. Sit, listen.' Then he told her of his voyage His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back His gazing in on Annie, his resolve, And how he kept it. As the woman heard Fast flow'd the current of her easy tears While in her heart she yearn'd incessantly To rush abroad all round the little haven, Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes; But awed and promise-bounden she forbore,  
 Saying only, 'See your bairns before you go!  
 Eh, let me fetch 'em, Arden,' and arose Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung A moment on her words, but then replied:  
 'Woman, disturb me not now at the last, But let me hold my purpose till I die. Sit down again; mark me and understand, While I have power to speak. I charge you now,  
 When you shall see her, tell her that I died Blessing her, praying for her, loving her; Save for the bar between us, loving her As when she laid her head beside my own. And tell my daughter Annie, whom I saw So like her mother, that my latest breath Was spent in blessing her and praying for her.  
 And tell my son that I died blessing him. And say to Philip that I blest him too; He never meant us anything but good. But if my children care to see me dead, Who hardly knew me living, let them come, I am their father; but she must not come, For my dead face would vex her after-life. And now there is but one of all my blood, Who will embrace me in the world-to-be: This hair is his: she cut it off and gave it, And I have borne it with me all these years, And thought to bear it with me to my grave;  
 But now my mind is changed, for I shall see him, My babe in bliss: wherefore when I am gone, Take, give her this, for it may comfort her: It will moreover be a token to her, That I am he.'

He ceased; and Miriam Lane  
Made such a voluble answer promising all,  
That once again he roll'd his eyes upon her  
Repeating all he wish'd, and once again  
She promised.

Then the third night after this,  
While Enoch slumber'd motionless and  
pale,  
And Miriam watch'd and dozed at inter-  
vals,

There came so loud a calling of the sea,  
That all the houses in the haven rang.  
He woke, he rose, he spread his arms  
abroad  
Crying with a loud voice 'a sail! a sail!  
I am saved'; and so fell back and spoke  
no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away.  
And when they buried him the little port  
Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.

## NORTHERN FARMER

OLD STYLE

[1864]

## I

WHEER 'asta beän saw long and meä liggin'  
'ere aloän?  
Noorse? thoort nowt o' a noorse: whoy,  
Doctor's abeän an' agoän:  
Says that I moänt 'a naw moor äale: but  
I beänt a fool:  
Git ma my äale, fur I beänt a-gawin' to  
breäk my rule.

## II

Doctors, they knaws nowt, fur a says  
what's nawways true:  
Naw soort o' koind o' use to saäy the  
things that a do.  
I've 'ed my point o' äale ivry noight sin'  
I beän 'ere,  
An' I've 'ed my quart ivry market-noight  
for foorty year.

## III

Parson's a beän loikewoise, an' a sittin' 'ere  
o' my bed.  
The amoightly's a taäkin o' you to 'issén,  
my friend,' a said,  
An' a towd ma my sins, an's toithe were  
due, an' I gied it in hond;  
I done moy duty by 'um, as I 'a done boy  
the lond.

## IV

Larn'd a ma' beä. I reckons I 'annot sa  
mooch to larn.  
But a cost oop, thot a did, 'boot Bessy  
Marris's barne.  
Thaw a knaws I hallus voäted wi' Squoire  
an' choorch an' staäte,  
An' i' the woost o' toimes I wur niver agin  
the raäte.

v

An' I hallus coom'd to 's choorch afoor  
moy Sally wur dead,  
An' eard 'um a bummin' awaäy loike a buzz-  
ard-clock<sup>1</sup> ower my 'ead,  
An' I never knew'd whot a meän'd but I  
thowt a 'ad summut to saäy,  
An' I thowt a said whot a owt to 'a said  
an' I coom'd awaäy.

## VI

Bessy Marris's barne! tha knaws she laäid  
it to meä.  
Mowt 'a beän, mayhap, for she wur a bad  
un, sheä.  
'Siver, I kep 'um, I kep 'um, my lass, tha  
mun understand;  
I done my duty by 'um as I 'a done boy the  
lond.

## VII

But Parson a cooms an' a goäs, an' a says  
it eäsy an' freeää  
'The amoightly's a taäkin' o' you to 'issén,  
my friend,' says 'eää.  
I weänt saäy men be loiars, thaw summun  
said it in 'äaste:  
But 'e reäds wonn sarmin a weeäk, an' I 'a  
stubb'd Thurnaby waäste.

## VIII

D'yä moind the waäste, my lass? naw, naw,  
tha was not born then;  
Theer wur a boggle in it, I often 'eard  
'um mysen;  
Moäst loike a butter-bump,<sup>2</sup> fur I 'eärd 'um  
about an' about,  
But I stubb'd 'um oop wi' the lot, an' raäved  
an' rembled 'um out.

## IX

Keäper's it wur; fo' they fun 'um theer  
a-laäid on 'is faäce  
Down i' the woold 'enemies<sup>3</sup> afoor I coom'd  
to the plaäce.  
Noäks or Thimbleby — toäner 'ed shot 'um  
as deäd as a naäil.  
Noäks wur 'ang'd for it oop at 'soize —  
but git ma my äale.

## X

Dubbut looäk at the waäste: theer warn't  
not feeäd for a cow:  
Nowt at all but bracken an' fuzz, an' looök  
at it now —  
Warnt worth nowt a haäcre, an' now theer's  
lots a' feeäd,  
Fourscoor yows upon it an' some on it  
down i' seeäd.

## XI

Nobbut a bit on it 's left, an' I meän'd to  
'a stubb'd it at fall,  
Done it ta-year I meän'd, an' runn'd plow  
thruff it an' all,

<sup>1</sup> Cockchafer. <sup>2</sup> Bittern. <sup>3</sup> Anemones.

If godamoightly an' parson 'ud nobbut let  
ma aloän,  
Meä, wi' haäte hoonderd häcre o'  
Squoire's, an' lond o' my oän.

XII.  
Do godamoightly knaw what a's doing  
a-täakin' o' meä?  
I beänt wönn as saws 'ere a beän an'  
yonder a peä;  
An' Squoire 'ull be sa mad an' all—a'  
dear a' dear!  
And, I 'a managed for Squoire coom  
Michaelmas thutty year.

XIII  
A mowt 'a taäen owd Joänes, as 'ant not a  
'äpoth o' sense,  
Or a mowt 'a taäen young Robins—a niver  
mended a fence:  
But godamoightly a moost taäke meä an'  
taäke ma now  
Wi aäf the cows to cauve an' Thurnaby  
hoälms to plow!

XIV  
Looök 'ow quoloty smoiles when they seeäss  
ma a passin' boy,  
Says to thessén naw doubt 'what a man a  
beä sewer-loy'  
For they knaws what I beän to Squoire sin  
fust a coom'd to the 'All;  
I done moy duty by Squoire an' I done my  
duty by hall.

XV  
Squoire's i' Lunnon, an' summun I reckons  
'ull 'a to wroite,  
For whoä's to howd the lond ater meä that  
muddles ma quoit;  
Sartin-sewer I beä, thot a weänt niver give  
it to Joänes,  
Naw, nor a moänt to Robins—a niver rem-  
bles the stoäns.

XVI  
But summun 'ull come ater meä mayhap  
wi' 'is kittle o' steäm  
Huzzin' an' maäzin' the blessed feälds wi'  
the Divil's oän team.  
Sin' I mun doy I mun doy, thaw loife they  
says is sweet,  
But sin' I mun doy I mun doy, for I  
couldn abear to see it.

XVII  
What atta stannin' theer fur, an' doesn  
bring ma the äle?  
Doctor's a 'toättler, lass, an a's hallus i'  
the owd taäle;  
I weänt break rules fur Doctor, a knaws  
naw moor nor a floy,'  
Git ma my äale I tell tha, an' if I mun  
doy I mun doy.

## NORTHERN FARMER

NEW STYLE

[1869]

I  
Dosn't thou 'ear my 'erse's legs, as they  
canters awäy?  
Proputty, proputty, proputty—that's what  
I 'ears 'em saäy.  
Proputty, proputty, proputty—Sam, thou's  
an ass for thy paaïns;  
Theer's moor sense i' one o' 'is legs, nor  
in all thy braains.

II  
Woä—theer's a craw to pluck wi' tha,  
Sam: yon 's parson's 'ouse—  
Dosn't thou knaw that a man mun be  
cäther a man or a mouse?  
Time to think on it then; for thou'll be  
twenty to weeäk.<sup>1</sup>  
Proputty, proputty—woä then, woä—let  
ma 'ear mysén speäk.

III  
Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän  
a-talkin' o' thee;  
Thou's beän talkin' to muther, an' she beän  
a-tellin' it me.  
Thou'll not marry for munny—thou's  
sweet upo' parson's lass—  
Noä—thou'll marry for luvv—an' we  
boäth on us thinks tha an ass.

IV  
Seeäd her to-daäy goä by—Säaint's däay  
—they was ringing the bells.  
She's a beauty, thou thinks—an' soä is  
scoops o' gells,  
Them as 'as munny an' all—wot's a  
beauty?—the flower as blaws.  
But proputty, proputty sticks, an' proputty,  
proputty graws.

V  
Do'ant be stunt;<sup>2</sup> taäke time. I knaws  
what maäkes tha sa mad.  
Warn't I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when  
I wur a lad?  
But I knew'd a Quäaker feller as often  
'as towd ma this:  
'Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä  
wheer munny is!'

VI  
An' I went wheer munny war; an' thy  
muther coom to 'and,  
Wi' lots o' munny laaid by, an' a nicetish  
bit o' land.

<sup>1</sup> This week.<sup>2</sup> Obstinate.

Maäye she warn't a beauty—I niver giv  
it a thowt—  
But warn't she as good to cuddle an' kiss  
as a lass as 'ant nowt?

## VII

Parson's lass 'ant nowt, an' she weänt a  
nowt when e' s' dead,  
Mun be a guvness, lad, or summut, and  
addle<sup>1</sup> her bread.  
Why? fur e' s' nobbut a curate, an' weänt  
niver get hissen clear,  
An' e' maäde the bed as 'e liggs on afoor  
'e coom'd to the shere.

## VIII

An' thin 'e coom'd to the parish wi' lots  
o' Varsity debt,  
Stook to his taail they did, an' e' ant got  
shut on 'em yet.  
An' e' liggs on 'is back i' the grip, wi' noän  
to lend 'im a shuvv,  
Woorse nor a far-welter'd<sup>2</sup> yowe; fur,  
Sammy, 'e married fur luvv.

## IX

Luvv? what's luvv? thou can luvv thy lass  
an' er munny too,  
Maakin' em goä togither as they've good  
right to do.  
Could'n I luvv thy muther by cause o' er  
munny laaid by?  
Naäy—fur I luvv'd er a vast sight moor  
fur it: reäson why.

## X

Ay' an' thy muther says thou wants to  
marry the lass,  
Cooms of a gentleman burn: an' we boäth  
on us thinks tha an ass.  
Woä then, propputy, wiltha? —an ass as  
near as mays nowt<sup>3</sup>—  
Woä then, wiltha? dangtha! —the bees is  
as fell as owt.<sup>4</sup>

## XI

Breäk me a bit o' the esh for his 'ead,  
lad, out o' the fence!  
Gentleman burn! what's gentleman burn?  
is it shillins an' pence?  
Propputy, propputy's ivrything 'ere, an'  
Sammy, I'm blest  
If it is n't the saäme oop yonder, fur  
them as 'as it 's the best.

## XII

Tis 'n them as 'as munny as breäks into  
'ouses an' steäls,  
Them as 'as coäts to their backs an' taäkes  
their regular meäls.

<sup>1</sup> Earn.<sup>2</sup> Or fow-welter'd.—said of a sheep lying on  
its back in the furrow.<sup>3</sup> Makes, nothing.<sup>4</sup> The flies are as fierce as anything.

Noä, but it 's them as niver knaws wheer  
a meäl's to be 'ad.  
Taäke my word for it Sammy, the poor  
in a loomp is bad.

## XIII

Them or thir feythers, tha sees, mun 'a  
beän a lääzy lot,  
Fur work mun 'a gone to the gittin' whin-  
iver munny was got.  
Feyther 'ad ammost nowt; leastways 'is  
munny was 'id.  
Bue 'e tued an' moi'l'd issén deäd, an' e'  
died a good un, 'e did.

## XIV

Looök thou theer wheer Wrigglesby beck  
cooms out by the 'ill!  
Feyther run oop to the farm, an' I runs  
oop to the mill;  
An' I'll run oop to the brig, an' that  
thou'll live to see;  
And if thou marries a good un I'll leäve  
the land to thee.

## XV

Thim's my noäitions, Sammy, wheerby I  
means to stick;  
But if thou marries a bad un, I'll leave  
the land to Dick.—  
Coom oop, propputy, propputy—that's  
what I 'ears 'im saäy—  
Propputy, propputy, propputy—canter an'  
canter awäay.

## WAGES

[1868]

GLORY of warrior, glory of orator, glory  
of song,  
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on  
an endless sea—  
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to  
right the wrong—  
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no  
lover of glory she;  
Give her the glory of going on, and still  
to be.

The wages of sin is death: if the wages  
of Virtue be dust,  
Would she have heart to endure for the  
life of the worm and the fly?  
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet  
seats of the just,  
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask  
in a summer sky;  
Give her the wages of going on, and not  
to die.

## THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

[1869]

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the  
hills and the plains,—  
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him  
who reigns?

Is not the Vision he, tho' He be not that  
which He seems?  
Dreams are true while they last, and do  
we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of  
body and limb,  
Are they not sign and symbol of thy  
division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the  
reason why,  
For is He not all but thou, that hast  
power to feel 'I am I'?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou  
fulfillest thy doom,  
Making Him broken gleams and a stifled  
splendor and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and  
Spirit with Spirit can meet—  
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer  
than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O soul, and  
let us rejoice,  
For if He thunder by law the thunder is  
yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all,  
says the fool,  
For all we have power to see is a straight  
staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the  
eye of man cannot see;  
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—  
were it not He?

#### FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL

[1869]

FLOWER in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

#### IDYLLS OF THE KING

##### THE COMING OF ARTHUR

[1869]

LEODGRAN, the king of Cameliard,  
Had one fair daughter, and none other  
child;  
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,  
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came  
Ruled in this isle and, ever waging war  
Each upon other, wasted all the land;  
And still from time to time the heathen  
host

Swarm'd over-seas, and harried what was  
left.

And so there grew great tracts of wilder-  
ness,  
Wherein the beast was ever more and  
more,  
But man was less and less, till Arthur  
came.  
For first Aurelius lived and fought and  
died,  
And after him King Uther fought and  
died,  
But either fail'd to make the kingdom  
one.

And after these King Arthur for a space,  
And thro' the puissance of his Table  
Round,

Drew all their petty princedoms under him,  
Their king and head, and made a realm and  
reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was  
waste,  
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast  
therein,  
And none or few to scare or chase the  
beast;  
So that wild dog and wolf and boar and  
bear  
Came night and day, and rooted in the  
fields,  
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.  
And ever and anon the wolf would steal  
The children and devour, but now and  
then,  
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her  
fierce teat  
To human sucklings; and the children,  
housed  
In her foul den, there at their meat would  
growl,  
And mock their foster-mother on four  
feet,  
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-  
like men,  
Worse than the wolves. And King Leo-  
dogran

Groan'd for the Roman legions here again  
And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,  
Urien, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,  
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth  
with blood,

And on the spike that split the mother's  
heart  
Spitting the child, brake on him, till  
amazed,  
He knew not whither he should turn for  
aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly  
crown'd,  
Tho' not without an uproar made by those  
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the  
King.

Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!  
For here between the man and beast we die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,  
But heard the call and came: and Guinevere  
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;  
But since he neither wore on helm or shield  
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,  
But rode a simple knight among his knights,  
And many of these in richer arms than he,  
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,

One among many, tho' his face was bare.  
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,  
Felt the light of her eyes into his life  
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd  
His tents beside the forest. Then he drove  
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and fell'd  
The forest, letting in the sun, and made  
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,  
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,  
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts  
Of those great lords and barons of his realm  
Flash'd forth and into war; for most of these,  
Colleaguing with a score of petty kings,  
Made head against him, crying: 'Who is he  
That he should rule us? who hath proven him  
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,  
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,  
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.  
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King:  
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,  
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,  
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere,  
And thinking as he rode: 'Her father said  
That there between the man and beast  
they die.  
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts  
Up to my throne and side by side with me?  
What happiness to reign a lonely king,

Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,  
O earth that soundest hollow under me,  
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd

To her that is the fairest under heaven,  
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,  
And cannot will my will nor work my work  
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm  
Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,  
Then might we live together as one life,  
And reigning with one will in everything  
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,  
And power on this dead world to make it live.'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the tale—

When Arthur reach'd a field of battle bright  
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world  
Was all so clear about him that he saw  
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,  
And even in high day the morning star.  
So when the King had set his banner broad,  
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,  
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,  
The long-lanced battle let their horses run.  
And now the barons and the kings prevail'd,  
And now the King, as here and there that war  
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world  
Made lightnings and great thunders over him,  
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,  
And mightier of his hands with every blow,  
And leading all his knighthood threw the kings  
Caradós, Urien, Cradlement of Wales,  
Claudius, and Clariance of Northumberland.

The King Brandagoras of Latangor,  
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,  
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice  
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees

To one who sins, and deems himself alone  
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake  
Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands  
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho! they yield!'

So like a painted battle the war stood  
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,  
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.  
He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he  
loved  
And honor'd most. 'Thou dost not doubt  
me King,  
So well thine arm hath wrought for me  
to-day.'  
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of  
God  
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:  
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the  
two,  
For each had warded either in the fight,  
Swore on the field of death a deathless  
love.  
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in  
man:  
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the  
death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he  
sent  
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,  
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,  
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee  
well,  
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'  
Whom when he heard, Leodogran in  
heart  
Debating — 'How should I that am a king,  
However much he help me at my need,  
Give my one daughter saving to a king.  
And a king's son?' — lifted his voice, and  
call'd  
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom  
He trusted all things, and of him required  
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Ar-  
thur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and  
said:  
'Sir King, there be but two old men that  
know;  
And each is twice as old as I; and one  
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served  
King Uther thro' his magic art; and one  
Is Merlin's master — so they call him —  
Bleys,

Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran  
Before the master, and so far that Bleys  
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and  
wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did  
In one great annal-book, where after-  
years  
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's  
birth.'

'To whom the King Leodogran replied:  
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well  
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,  
Then beast and man had had their share  
of me;

But summon here before us yet once more  
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the  
King said:  
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser  
fowl,  
And reason in the chase; but wherefore  
now  
Do these your lords stir up the heat of  
war,  
Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,  
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,  
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay.'  
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights  
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,  
spake —  
For bold in heart and act and word was  
he,  
Whenever slander breathed against the  
King —

'Sir, there be many rumors on this head:  
For there be those who hate him in their  
hearts,  
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are  
sweet,  
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than  
man;  
And there be those who deem him more  
than man,  
And dream he dropt from heaven: but my  
belief  
In all this matter — so ye care to learn —  
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's  
time  
The prince and warrior Gorlois, he that  
held  
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,  
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne;  
And daughters had she borne him, — one  
whereof,  
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,  
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved  
To Arthur, — but a son she had not borne  
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love;  
But she, a stainless wife to Gorlois,  
So loathed the bright dishonor of his love  
That Gorlois and King Uther went to war,  
And overthrown was Gorlois and slain.  
Then Uther in his wrath and heat be-  
sieged

Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,  
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,  
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,  
And there was none to call to but him-  
self.

So, compass'd by the power of the King,  
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,  
And with a shameful swiftness; afterward,  
Not many moons, King Uther died him-  
self,

Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule  
After him, lest the realm should go to  
wrack.

And that same night, the night of the new  
year,

By reason of the bitterness and grief  
That vex'd his mother, all before his time  
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born  
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate  
To Merlin, to be holden far apart  
Until his hour should come; because the  
lords

Of that fierce day were as the lords of  
this,

Wild beasts, and surely would have torn  
the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known;  
for each

But sought to rule for his own self and  
hand,

And many hated Uther for the sake  
Of Gorlois. Wherefore Merlin took the  
child,

And gave him to Sir Anfon, an old knight  
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife  
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him  
with her own;

And no man knew. And ever since the  
lords

Have foughten like wild beasts among  
themselves,

So that the realm has gone to wrack; but  
now,

This year, when Merlin—for his hour  
had come—

Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the  
hall,

Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your  
king,"

A hundred voices cried: "Away with him!  
No king of ours! a son of Gorlois he;  
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,  
Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his  
craft,

And while the people clamor'd for a king,  
Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great  
lords

Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with him-  
self

If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,  
Or born the son of Gorlois after death,  
Or Uther's son and born before his time,  
Or whether there were truth in anything  
Said by these three, there came to Came-  
liard,

With Gawain and young Modred, her two  
sons,

Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli-  
cent;

Whom as he could, not as he would, the  
King

Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat:  
'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.  
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his  
men

Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this  
king—

So many those that hate him, and so strong,  
So few his knights, however brave they  
be—

Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee:  
few,

Few, but all brave, all of one mind with  
him;

For I was near him when the savage yells  
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat  
Crowned on the dais, and his warriors  
cried,

"Be thou the king, and we will work thy  
will

Who love thee." Then the King in low  
deep tones,

And simple words of great authority,  
Bound them by so strait vows to his own  
self

That when they rose, knighted from kneel-  
ing, some

Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,  
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one  
who wakes

Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake, and cheer'd his  
Table Round

With large, divine, and comfortable words,  
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld  
From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash  
A momentary likeness of the King;  
And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross  
And those around it and the Crucified,  
Down from the casement over Arthur,  
smote

Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,  
One falling upon each of three fair queens  
Who stood in silence near his throne, the  
friends

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright  
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose  
vast wit

And hundred winters are but as the hands  
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the  
Lake,

Who knows a subtler magic than his own—  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.  
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted  
sword,

Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist  
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face  
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;

But there was heard among the holy hymns  
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells  
Down in a deep—calm, whatsoever storms  
May shake the world—and when the surface rolls,  
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur  
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword  
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,  
And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich  
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,  
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright  
That men are blinded by it—on one side,  
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,  
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,  
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,  
"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face  
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,  
"Take thou and strike! the time to cast away  
Is yet far-off." So this great brand the king  
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought  
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,  
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,  
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,  
But thou art closer to this noble prince,  
Being his own dear sister,' and she said,  
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygerne am I;  
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd the King.

She answer'd, 'These be secret things,' and sign'd  
To those two sons to pass, and let them be.  
And Gawain went, and breaking into song  
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair  
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw;  
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,  
And there half-heard—the same that afterward  
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer:  
'What know I?  
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,  
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark  
Was Gorlois; yea, and dark was Uther too,  
Wellnigh to blackness; but this king is fair  
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.  
Moreover, always in my mind I hear  
A cry from out the dawning of my life,

A mother weeping, and I hear her say,  
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,  
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world."

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?  
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee true:  
He found me first when yet a little maid;  
Beaten I had been for a little fault  
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran  
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,  
And hated this fair world and all therein,  
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead;  
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,  
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk

Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,  
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,

And dried my tears, being a child with me.  
And many a time he came, and evermore  
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad  
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,

Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,

But sweet again, and then I loved him well.  
And now of late I see him less and less,  
But those first days had golden hours for me,

For then I surely thought he would be king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:  
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,  
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,  
To hear him speak before he left his life.  
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;

And when I enter'd told me that himself  
And Merlin ever served about the King,  
Uther, before he died; and on the night  
When Uther in Tintagil past away  
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two  
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,

Then from the castle gateway by the chasm  
Descending thro' the dismal night—a night  
In which the bounds of heaven and earth  
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps  
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape  
thereof

A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern

Bright with a shining people on the decks,  
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two

Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great  
sea fall,  
Wave after wave, each mightier than the  
last,  
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the  
deep

And full of voices, slowly rose and plung'd  
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:  
And down the wave and in the flame was  
borne

A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,  
Who stoopt and caught the babe and cried,  
"The King!"

Here is an heir for Uther!" And the  
fringe

Of that great breaker, sweeping up the  
strand,

Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,  
And all at once all round him rose in fire,  
So that the child and he were clothed in  
fire.

And presently thereafter follow'd calm,  
Free sky and stars: "And this same child,"  
he said,

"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in  
peace  
Till this were told." And saying this the  
seer

Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of  
death,

Not ever to be question'd any more  
Save on the further side; but when I met  
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were  
truth—

The shining dragon and the naked child  
Descending in the glory of the seas—  
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me  
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:—

"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the  
sky!

A young man will be wiser by and by;  
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!  
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;  
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom  
blows:

Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who  
knows?

From the great deep to the great deep he  
goes."

"So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou  
Fear not to give this King thine only child,  
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing  
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of o'd  
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of  
men,

And echo'd by old folk beside their fires  
For comfort after their wage-work is done,  
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time  
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn

Tho' men may wound him that he will not  
die,  
But pass, again to come, and then or now  
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,  
Till these and all men hail him for their  
king.'

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,  
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'  
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept,  
and saw,

Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,  
Field after field, up to a height, the peak  
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,  
Now looming, and now lost; and on the  
slope

The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was  
driven,  
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof  
and rick,

In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,  
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the  
haze

And made it thicker; while the phantom  
king

Sent out at times a voice; and here or  
there

Stood one who pointed toward the voice,  
the rest

Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of  
ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours';  
Till with a wink his dream was changed,  
the haze

Descended, and the solid earth became  
As nothing, but the King stood out in  
heaven,

Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent  
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,

Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom  
he loved

And honor'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride  
forth

And bring the Queen, and watch'd him  
from the gates;

And Lancelot past away among the  
flowers—

For then was latter April—and return'd  
Among the flowers, in May, with Guine-  
vere.

To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,  
Chief of the church in Britain, and before  
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the  
King

That morn was married, while in stainless  
white,

The fair beginners of a nobler time,  
And glorying in their vows and him, his  
knights

Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.  
Far shone the fields of May thro' open  
door,

The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,  
The Sun of May descended on their King,  
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their  
Queen,  
Roll'd incense, and there past along the  
hymns  
A voice as of the waters, while the two  
Swore at the shrine of Christ a deathless  
love:  
And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is  
mine.  
Let chance what will, I love thee to the  
death!'  
To whom the Queen replied with drooping  
eyes,  
'King and my lord, I love thee to the  
death!'  
And holy Dubric spread his hands and  
spake:  
'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the  
world  
Other, and may thy Queen be one with  
thee,  
And all this Order of thy Table Round  
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

So Dubric said; but when they left the  
shrine  
Great lords from Rome before the portal  
stood,  
In scornful stillness gazing as they past:  
Then while they paced a city all on fire  
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets  
blew,  
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the  
King:—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white  
with May!  
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd  
away!  
Blow thro' the living world—"Let the  
King reign!"'

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's  
realm?  
Flash brand and lance, fall battle-axe upon  
helm,  
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the  
King reign!

'Strike for the King and live! his knights  
have heard  
That God hath told the King a secret word.  
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the  
King reign!

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the  
dust.  
Blow trumpet! live the strength, and die  
the lust!  
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let  
the King reign!'

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou  
diest,  
The King is king, and ever wills the high-  
est.  
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let  
the King reign!'

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his  
May!  
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!  
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let  
the King reign!'

'The King will follow Christ, and we  
the King,  
In whom high God hath breathed a secret  
thing.  
Fall battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the  
King reign!'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their  
hall.  
There at the banquet those great lords from  
Rome,  
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,  
Strode in and claim'd their tribute as of  
yore.  
But Arthur spake: 'Behold, for these have  
sworn  
To wage my wars, and worship me their  
King;  
The old order changeth, yielding place to  
new;  
And we that fight for our fair father  
Christ,  
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and  
old  
To drive the heathen from your Roman  
wall,  
No tribute will we pay.' So those great  
lords  
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove  
with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a  
space  
Were all one will, and thro' that strength  
the King  
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,  
Fought, and in twelve great battles over-  
came  
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and  
reign'd.

#### LANCELOT AND ELAINE

[1859]

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the lovable,  
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,  
High in her chamber up a tower to the  
east  
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;  
Which first she placed where morning's  
earliest ray

Might strike it, and awake her with the  
gleam;  
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for  
it

A case of silk, and braided thereupon  
All the devices blazon'd on the shield  
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,  
A border fantasy of branch and flower,  
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.  
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,  
Leaving her household and good father,  
climb'd

That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her  
door,  
Stript off the case, and read the naked  
shield,

Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,  
Now made a pretty history to herself  
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,  
And every scratch a lance had made upon  
it,

Conjecturing when and where: this cut is  
fresh;

That ten years back; this dealt him at  
Caerlyle;

That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:  
And ah, God's mercy, what a stroke was  
there!

And here a thrust that might have kill'd,  
but God

Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his  
enemy down,

And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good  
shield  
Of Lancelot, she that knew not even his  
name?

He left it with her, when he rode to tilt  
For the great diamond in the diamond  
jousts,

Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that  
name

Had named them, since a diamond was the  
prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd  
him king,

Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,  
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black  
tarn.

A horror lived about the tarn, and clav'd  
Like its own mists to all the mountain  
side:

For here two brothers, one a king, had  
met

And fought together; but their names were  
lost;

And each had slain his brother at a blow;  
And down they fell and made the glen  
abhor'd:

And there they lay till all their bones  
were bleach'd,  
And lichen'd into color with the crags:

And he that once was king had on a  
crown

Of diamonds, one in front and four aside.  
And Arthur came, and laboring up the  
pass,

All in a misty moonshine, unawares  
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and  
the skull

Brake from the nape, and from the skull  
the crown

Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims  
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:  
And down the shingly scaur he plunged,  
and caught,

And set it on his head, and in his heart  
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt  
be king.'

Thereafter, when a king, he had the  
gems

Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them  
to his knights

Saying: 'These jewels, whereupon I  
chanced

Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the  
King's —

For public use: henceforward let there  
be,

Once every year, a joust for one of these:  
For so by nine years' proof we needs must  
learn

Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall  
grow

In use of arms and manhood, till we drive  
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule  
the land

Hereafter, which God hinder!' Thus he  
spoke:

And eight years past, eight jousts had been,  
and still

Had Lancelot won the diamond of the  
year,

With purpose to present them to the Queen  
When all were won; but, meaning all at  
once

To snare her royal fancy with a boon  
Worth half her realm, had never spoken  
word.

Now for the central diamond and the  
last

And largest, Arthur, holding then his  
court

Hard on the river nigh the place which  
now

Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust  
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh  
Spake — for she had been sick — to Guine-  
vere:

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot  
move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said  
'ye know it.'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the great  
deeds  
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,  
A sight ye love to look on.' And the  
Queen  
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly  
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the  
King.  
He, thinking that he read her meaning  
there,  
'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more  
Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a  
heart  
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen —  
However much he yearn'd to make com-  
plete  
The tale of diamonds for his destined  
boon —  
Urged him to speak against the truth, and  
say,  
'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly  
whole,  
And lets me from the saddle;' and the  
King  
Glanced first at him, then her, and went  
his way.  
No sooner gone than suddenly she began:  
'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to  
blame!  
Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the  
knights  
Are half of them our enemies, and the  
crowd  
Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who  
take  
Their pastime now the trustful King is  
gone!"'  
Then Lancelot, vext at having lied in vain:  
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so  
wise,  
My Queen, that summer when ye loved me  
first.  
Then of the crowd ye took no more  
account  
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,  
When its own voice clings to each blade of  
grass,  
And every voice is nothing. As to knights,  
Them surely can I silence with all ease.  
But now my loyal worship is allow'd  
Of all men: many a bard, without offence,  
Has link'd our names together in his lay,  
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,  
The pearl of beauty; and our knights at  
feast  
Have pledged us in this union, while the  
King  
Would listen smiling. How then? is there  
more?  
Has Arthur spoken aught? or would your-  
self,  
Now weary of my service and devoir,  
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh:  
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless  
King,  
That passionate perfection, my good lord —  
But who can gaze upon the sun in heaven?  
He never spake word of reproach to me,  
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,  
He cares not for me: only here to-day  
There gleamed a vague suspicion in his  
eyes:  
Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with  
him — else  
Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,  
And swearing men to vows impossible,  
To make them like himself; but, friend, to  
me  
He is all fault who hath no fault at all:  
For who loves me must have a touch of  
earth;  
The low sun makes the color: I am yours,  
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the  
bond.  
And therefore hear my words: go to the  
jousts:  
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our  
dream  
When sweetest; and the vermin voices here  
May buzz so loud — we scorn them, but  
they sting.  
Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of  
knights:  
'And with what face, after my pretext  
made,  
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I  
Before a king who honors his own word  
As if it were his God's?'  
  
'Yea,' said the Queen,  
'A moral child without the craft to rule,  
Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,  
If I must find you wit: we hear it said  
That men go down before your spear at a  
touch,  
But knowing you are Lancelot; your great  
name,  
This conquers: hide it therefore; go un-  
known:  
Win! by this kiss you will: and our true  
King  
Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,  
As all for glory; for to speak him true,  
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he  
seem,  
No keener hunter after glory breathes.  
He loves it in his knights more than him-  
self;  
They prove to him his work: win and  
return.'  
  
Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,  
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be  
known,  
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,

Chose the green path that show'd the rarer  
foot,  
And there among the solitary downs,  
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;  
Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,  
That all in loops and links among the  
dales  
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw  
Fired from the west, far on a hill, the  
towers.

Thither he made, and blew the gateway  
horn.  
Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled  
man,  
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.  
And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless  
man;  
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat  
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir  
Lavaine,

Moving to meet him in the castle court;  
And close behind them stept the lily maid  
Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house  
There was not. Some light jest among  
them rose  
With laughter dying down as the great  
knight

Approach'd them; then the Lord of Asto-  
lat:  
'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by  
what name

Livest between the lips? for by thy state  
And presence I might guess thee chief of  
those,  
After the King, who eat in Arthur's ha'ls.  
Him have I seen: the rest, his Table  
Round,

Known as they are, to me they are un-  
known.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of  
knights:

'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and  
known,

What I by mere mischance have brought,  
my shield.

But since I go to joust as one unknown  
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not;  
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the  
shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,  
Blank, or at least with some device not  
mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat: 'Here is  
Torre's:

Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir  
Torre;

And so, God wot, his shield is blank  
enough.

His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir  
Torre,

'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'

Here laugh'd the father saying: 'Fie, Sir  
Churl,  
Is that an answer for a noble knight?  
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,  
He is so full of lusthood, he will ride,  
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an  
hour,  
And set it in this damsel's golden hair,  
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay, good father, shame  
me not  
Before this noble knight,' said young  
Lavaine,  
'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:  
He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:  
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden  
dreamt  
That some one put this diamond in her  
hand,

And that it was too slippery to be held,  
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,  
The castle-well, belike; and then I said  
That if I went and if I fought and won it—  
But all was jest and joke among our-  
selves—

Then must she keep it safelier. All was  
jest.

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,  
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:  
Win shall I not, but do my best to win;  
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd Lancelot,  
Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship  
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost my-  
self,

Then were I glad of you as guide and  
friend:

And you shall win this diamond,—as I  
hear,

It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,  
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.  
'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir  
Torre,

'Such be for queens, and not for simple  
maids.'

Then she, who held her eyes upon the  
ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,  
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement  
Before the stranger knight, who, looking  
at her,

Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd:  
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,  
And only queens are to be counted so,  
Rash were my judgment then, who deem  
this maid

Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,  
Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid  
Elaine,

Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,  
Lifted her eyes and read his lineaments.

The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,  
 In battle with the love he bare his lord,  
 Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere his time.  
 Another sinning on such heights with one,  
 The flower of all the west and all the world,  
 Had been the sleeker for it; but in him His mood was often like a fiend, and rose  
 And drove him into wastes and solitudes For agony, who 'was yet a living soul.  
 Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest man  
 That ever among ladies ate in hall,  
 And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes. However marr'd, of more than twice her years,  
 Seam'd with an ancient sword-cut on the cheek,  
 And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes  
 And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,  
 Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain  
 Hid under grace, as in a smaller time, But kindly man moving among his kind: Whom they with meats and vintage of their best  
 And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd. And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,  
 And ever well and readily answer'd he; But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guin-evere,  
 Suddenly speaking of the wordless man, Heard from the baron that, ten years before,  
 The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.  
 'He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design  
 Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd;  
 But I, my sons, and little daughter fled From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods  
 By the great river in a boatman's hut. Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke  
 The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine said, rapt  
 By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth  
 Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have fought.  
 O, tell us — for we live apart — you know

Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot spoke  
 And answer'd him at full, as having been With Arthur in the fight which all day long Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;  
 And in the four loud battles by the shore Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts Of Celidon the forest; and again By Castle Gurnion, where the glorious King  
 Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head, Carved of one emerald centred in a sun Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed;  
 And at Cærleon had he helped his lord, When the strong neighings of the wild White Horse  
 Set every gilded parapet shuddering; And up in Agned-Cathregonion too, And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treriot,  
 Where many a heathen fell; 'and on the mount  
 Of Badon I myself beheld the King Charge at the head of all his Table Round, And all his legions crying Christ and him, And break them; and I saw him, after, stand High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume Red as the rising sun with heathen blood, And seeing me, with a great voice he cried, "They are broken, they are broken!" for the King,  
 However mild he seems at home, nor cares For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts,— For if his own knight casts him down, he laughs, Saying his knights are better men than he— Yet in this heathen war the fire of God Fills him: I never saw his like; there lives No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this, Low to her own heart said the lily maid, 'Save your great self, fair lord,' and when he fell From talk of war to traits of pleasantry — Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind — She still took note that when the living smile Died from his lips, across him came a cloud Of melancholy severe, from which again, Whenever in her hovering to and fro The lily maid had striven to make him cheer, There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness Of manners and of nature: and she thought

That all was nature, all, perchance, for  
her.  
And all night long his face before her  
lived,  
As when a painter, poring on a face,  
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man  
Behind it, and so paints him that his  
face,  
The shape and color of a mind and life,  
Lives for his children, ever at its best  
And fullest; so the face before her lived,  
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full  
Of noble things, and held her from her  
sleep,  
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the  
thought  
She needs must bid farewell to sweet  
Lavaine.  
First as in fear, step after step, she stole  
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:  
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the  
court,  
'This shield, my friend, where is it?' and  
Lavaine  
Past inward, as she came from out the  
tower.  
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,  
and smooth'd  
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.  
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she  
drew  
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and, more  
amazed  
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw  
The maiden standing in the dewy light.  
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.  
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,  
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood  
Rapt on his face as if it were a god's.  
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire  
That he should wear her favor at the  
tilt.  
She braved a riotous heart in asking for  
it.  
'Fair lord, whose name I know not —  
noble it is,  
I well believe, the noblest — will you wear  
My favor at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he,  
'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn  
Favor of any lady in the lists.  
Such is my wont, as those who know me  
know.'  
'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing  
mine  
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,  
That those who know should know you.  
And he turn'd  
Her counsel up and down within his mind,  
And found it true, and answer'd: 'True,  
my child.  
Well, I will wear it; fetch it out to me:  
What is it?' and she told him, 'A red  
sleeve

Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it: then  
he bound  
Her token on his helmet, with a smile  
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much  
For any maiden living,' and the blood  
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with  
delight;  
But left her all the paler when Lavaine  
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd  
shield,  
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,  
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:  
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my  
shield  
In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'  
She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your  
squire!'  
Whereat Lavaine said laughing: 'Lily maid,  
For fear our people call you lily maid  
In earnest, let me bring your color back;  
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence  
to bed.'  
So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own  
hand,  
And thus they moved away: she staid a  
minute,  
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and  
there —  
Her bright hair blown about the serious  
face  
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss —  
Paused by the gateway, standing near the  
shield  
In silence, while she watch'd their arms  
far-off  
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.  
Then to her tower she climb'd, and took  
the shield,  
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.  
Meanwhile the new companions past  
away  
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless  
downs,  
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived  
a knight  
Not far from Camelot, now for forty  
years  
A hermit, who had pray'd, labor'd and  
pray'd,  
And ever laboring had scoop'd himself  
In the white rock a chapel and a hall  
On massive columns, like a shore-cliff cave,  
And cells and chambers: all were fair and  
dry;  
The green light from the meadows under-  
neath  
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;  
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-  
trees  
And poplars made a noise of falling show-  
ers.  
And thither wending there that night they  
bode.

But when the next day broke from under-ground,  
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,  
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away.  
Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold my name  
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,  
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence, Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,  
But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it indeed?'  
And after muttering, 'The great Lancelot,' At last he got his breath and answer'd: 'One,  
One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,  
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,  
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,  
He will be there—then were I stricken blind  
That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists  
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round  
Lay like a rainbow fallen upon the grass.  
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat  
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,  
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,  
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,  
And from the carven-work behind him crept  
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them  
Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable  
Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found  
The new design wherein they lost themselves,  
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:  
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set, Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said:  
'Me you call great: mine is the firmer seat,  
The truer lance: but there is many a youth  
Now crescent, who will come to all I am  
And overcome it; and in me there dwells

No greatness, save it be some far-off touch  
Of greatness to know well I am not great:  
There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped upon him  
As on a thing miraculous, and anon  
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,  
They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,  
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,  
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously Shock that a man far-off might well perceive,  
If any man that day were left afield,  
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.  
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into it  
Against the stronger: little need to speak Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl, Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew.  
But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,  
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,  
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight  
Should do and almost overdo the deeds Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, 'Lo!  
What is he? I do not mean the force alone—  
The grace and versatility of the man!  
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lancelot worn  
Favor of any lady in the lists?  
Not such his wont, as we that know him know.'  
'How then? who then?' a fury seized them all,  
A fiery family passion for the name Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.  
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and thus,  
Their plumes driven backward by the wind they made  
In moving, all together down upon him Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North Sea,  
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,  
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark And him that helms it; so they overbore Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear

Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head  
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully:  
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,  
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.

He up the side, sweating with agony, got,  
But thought to do while he might yet endure,

And being lustily holpen by the rest,  
His party,—tho' it seem'd half-miracle  
To those he fought with,—drove his kith and kin,

And all the Table Round that held the lists,  
Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew

Proclaiming his the prize who wore the sleeve

Of scarlet and the pearls; and all the knights,

His party, cried, 'Advance and take thy prize

The diamond;' but he answer'd: 'Diamond me

No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!  
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!  
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field  
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.  
There from his charger down he slid, and sat,  
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-head.'

'Ah, my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,  
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'  
But he, 'I die already with it: draw—  
Draw,'—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave

A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,  
And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank

For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.

Then came the hermit out and bare him in,  
There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt

Whether to live or die, for many a week  
Hid from the wild world's rumor by the grove

Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,  
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,  
His party, knights of utmost North and West,  
Lords of waste marshes, kings of desolate isles,  
Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,  
'Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,  
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize  
Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'  
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such an one,  
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—  
He seem'd to me another Lancelot—  
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—  
He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore rise,  
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.  
Wounded and wearied, needs must he be near.  
I charge you that you get at once to horse.  
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you  
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:  
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him  
No customary honor: since the knight  
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,  
Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take  
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,  
And bring us where he is, and how he fares,  
And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above,  
To which it made a restless heart, he took  
And gave the diamond: then from where he sat  
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,  
With smiling face and frowning heart, a prince  
In the mid might and flourish of his May,  
Gawain, surnamed the Courteous, fair and strong,  
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint,  
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal  
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,  
Nor often loyal to his word, and now Wroth that the King's command to sally forth

In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave  
The banquet and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;  
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,  
Past, thinking, 'Is it Lancelot who hath come  
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain  
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,  
And ridden away to die?' So fear'd the King,  
And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.  
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,  
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay, lord,' she said.  
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the Queen amazed,  
'Was he not with you? won he not your prize?'  
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why, that like was he.'  
And when the King demanded how she knew,  
Said: 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us  
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk  
That men went down before his spear at a touch,  
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name  
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name  
From all men, even the King, and to this end  
Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,  
That he might joust unknown of all, and learn  
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;  
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he learns,  
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain Of purer glory."

Then replied the King:  
'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,  
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,  
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.  
Surely his King and most familiar friend  
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,  
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,  
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot  
Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains  
But little cause for laughter: his own kin—  
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this! —

His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;  
So that he went sore wounded from the field,  
Yet good news too; for goodly hopes are mine  
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.  
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm  
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,  
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, Lord,' she said,  
'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that, she choked,  
And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,  
Past to her chamber, and there flung herself  
Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,  
And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,  
And shriek'd out 'Traitor!' to the unhearing wall,  
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,  
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region round  
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,  
Touch'd at all points except the poplar grove,  
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat;  
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid  
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from Camelot, lord?  
What of the knight with the red sleeve?'  
'He won.'  
'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the jousts  
Hurt in the side;' whereat she caught her breath;  
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go;  
Thereon she smote her hand; wellnigh she swoon'd:  
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came  
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the prince  
Reported who he was, and on what quest  
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find  
The victor, but had ridden a random round  
To seek him, and had wearied of the search.  
To whom the Lord of Astolat: 'Bide with us.  
And ride no more at random, noble prince!'

Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;  
This will he send or come for: furthermore  
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,  
Needs must we hear.' To this the courteous  
prince

Accorded with his wonted courtesy,  
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,  
And staid: and cast his eyes on fair Elaine;  
Where could be found face daintier? then  
her shape

From forehead down to foot, perfect—  
again

From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:  
'Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for  
me!'

And oft they met among the garden yews,  
And there he set himself to play upon her  
With sallying wit, free flashes from a  
height

Above her, graces of the court, and songs,  
Sighs, and low smiles, and golden elo-  
quence

And amorous adulation, till the maid  
Rebell'd against it, saying to him: 'Prince,  
O loyal nephew of our noble King,  
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,  
Whence you might learn his name? Why  
slight your King,

And lose the quest he sent you on, and  
prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,  
Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went  
To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine head,'  
said he,

'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,  
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;  
But an ye will let me see the shield,  
And when the shield was brought, and  
Gawain saw

Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with  
gold,

Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and  
mock'd:

'Right was the King! our Lancelot! that  
true man!'

'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, 'I,  
Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight  
of all.'

'And if I dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that you  
love

This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye  
know it!

Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in  
vain?'

Full simple was her answer: 'What know  
I?

My brethren have been all my fellowship;  
And I, when often they have talk'd of love,  
Wish'd it had been my mother, for they  
talk'd,  
Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so  
myself—

I know not if I know what true love is,  
But if I know, then, if I love not him,  
I know there is none other I can love.'

'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him  
well,

But would not, knew ye what all others  
know,

And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried  
Elaine,

And lifted her fair face and moved away:  
But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little!  
One golden minute's grace! he wore your  
sleeve:

Would he break faith with one I may not  
name?

Must our true man change like a leaf at  
last?

Nay—like enow: why then, far be it from  
me

To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!  
And, damsel, for I deem you know full  
well

Where your great knight is hidden, let me  
leave

My quest with you; the diamond also:  
here!

For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;  
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it  
From your own hand; and whether he love  
or not,

A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well  
A thousand times!—a thousand times  
farewell!

Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two  
May meet at court hereafter: there, I  
think,

So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,  
We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,  
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he  
gave,  
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest  
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he  
went  
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told  
the King

What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the  
knight.'

And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I  
learnt;

But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round  
The region: but I lighted on the maid  
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and  
to her,

Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,  
I gave the diamond: she will render it;  
For by mine head she knows his hiding-  
place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and  
replied,  
'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more

On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget  
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,  
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,  
Linger'd that other, staring after him;  
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad  
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.  
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed:  
'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,  
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'  
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all  
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most  
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame  
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.  
She, that had heard the noise of it before,  
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,  
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.  
So ran the tale like fire about the court,  
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared:  
Till even the knights at banquet twice or thrice  
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,  
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid  
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat  
With lips severely placid, felt the knot  
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen  
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor  
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became  
As wormwood and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,  
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept  
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,  
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,  
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said:  
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault  
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,  
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'  
'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me hence,'  
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear Lavaine.'  
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine;  
Bide,' answer'd he: 'we needs must hear anon'

Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she said, 'And of that other, for I needs must hence And find that other, whereso'er he be, And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,

Lest I be found as faithless in the quest As yon proud prince who left the quest to me.

Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself, Death-pale, for the lack of gentle maiden's aid.

The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,

My father, to be sweet and serviceable To noble knights in sickness, as ye know, When these have worn their tokens: let me hence,

I pray you.' Then her father nodding said:

'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child, Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,  
Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it —

And sure I think this fruit is hung too high For any mouth to gape for save a queen's — Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone, Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away, And while she made her ready for her ride

Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear, 'Being so very wilful you must go,' And changed itself and echo'd in her heart, 'Being so very wilful you must die.' But she was happy enough and shook it off, As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us; And in her heart she answer'd it and said, 'What matter, so I help him back to life?' Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide

Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs

To Camelot, and before the city-gates Came on her brother with a happy face Making a roan horse caper and curvet For pleasure all about a field of flowers; Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,

How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He amazed,

'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lance-lot!

How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?' But when the maid had told him all her tale,

Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods

Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,

Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,

Past up the still rich city to his kin,  
His own far blood, which dwelt at Came-  
lot;  
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove  
Led to the caves: there first she saw the  
casque  
Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,  
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls  
away,  
Stream'd from it still; and in her heart  
she laugh'd,  
Because he had not loosed it from his  
helm,  
But meant once more perchance to tourney  
in it.  
And when they gain'd the cell wherein he  
slept,  
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands  
Lay naked on the wolf-skin, and a dream  
Of dragging down his enemy made them  
move.  
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, un-  
shorn,  
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,  
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.  
The sound not wonted in a place so still  
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd  
his eyes  
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him,  
saying,  
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the  
King.'  
His eyes glisten'd: she fancied, 'Is it for  
me?'  
And when the maid had told him all the  
tale  
Of king and prince, the diamond sent, the  
quest  
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt  
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,  
And laid the diamond in his open hand.  
Her face was near, and as we kiss the  
child  
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her  
face.  
At once she slipt like water to the floor.  
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.  
Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,'  
she said;  
'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'  
What might she mean by that? his large  
black eyes,  
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon  
her,  
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself  
In the heart's colors on her simple face;  
And Lancelot look'd and was perplext in  
mind,  
And being weak in body said no more,  
But did not love the color; woman's love,  
Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd  
Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the  
fields,  
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured  
gates  
Far up the dim rich city to her kin:  
There bode the night: but woke with dawn,  
and past  
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,  
Thence to the cave. So day by day she  
past  
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro  
Gliding, and every day she tended him,  
And likewise many a night; and Lancelot  
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little  
hurt  
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at  
times  
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony,  
seem  
Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid  
Sweetly forebore him ever, being to him  
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,  
Milder than any mother to a sick child,  
And never woman yet, since man's first  
fall,  
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love  
Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all  
The simples and the science of that time,  
Told him that her fine care had saved  
his life.  
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,  
Would call her friend and sister, sweet  
Elaine,  
Would listen for her coming and regret  
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,  
And loved her with all love except the  
love  
Of man and woman when they love their  
best,  
Closest and sweetest, and had died the  
death  
In any knightly fashion for her sake.  
And peradventure had he seen her first  
She might have made this and that other  
world  
Another world for the sick man; but now  
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,  
His honor rooted in dishonor stood,  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.  
Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness  
made  
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.  
These, as but born of sickness, could not  
live;  
For when the blood ran lustier in him  
again,  
Full often the bright image of one face,  
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,  
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.  
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly  
grace  
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd  
not,

Or short and coldly, and she knew right well  
 What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant  
 She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,  
 And drove her ere her time across the fields  
 Far into the rich city, where alone  
 She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain: it cannot be.  
 He will not love me: how then? must I die?'  
 Then, as a little helpless innocent bird,  
 That has but one plain passage of few notes,  
 Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er  
 For all an April morning, till the ear  
 Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid  
 Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'  
 And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,  
 And found no ease in turning or in rest;  
 And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd, 'death or him,'  
 Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'  
 But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,  
 To Astolat returning rode the three.  
 There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self  
 In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,  
 She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought,  
 'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,  
 If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'  
 And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid  
 That she should ask some goodly gift of him  
 For her own self or hers: 'and do not shun  
 To speak the wish most near to your true heart;  
 Such service have ye done me that I make  
 My will of yours, and prince and lord am I  
 In mine own land, and what I will I can.'  
 Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,  
 But like a ghost without the power to speak.  
 And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,  
 And bode among them yet a little space  
 Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced  
 He found her in among the garden yews,  
 And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,  
 Seeing I go to-day;' then out she brake:  
 'Going? and we shall never see you more.'

And I must die for want of one bold word.'  
 'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'  
 Then suddenly and passionately she spoke: 'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.' 'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?' And innocently extending her white arms, 'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be your wife.' And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,  
 I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine; But now there never will be wife of mine.' 'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife, But to be with you still, to see your face, To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.' And Lancelot answer'd: 'Nay, the world, the world,  
 All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue To blare its own interpretation—nay, Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,  
 And your good father's kindness.' And she said,  
 'Not to be with you, not to see your face—Alas for me then, my good days are done!' 'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay!  
 This is not love, but love's first flash in youth,  
 Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self;  
 And you yourself will smile at your own self  
 Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life  
 To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age.  
 And then will I, for true you are and sweet Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,  
 More specially should your good knight be poor,  
 Endow you with broad land and territory Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,  
 So that would make you happy: furthermore,  
 Even to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,  
 In all your quarrels will I be your knight. This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,  
 And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke  
 She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale  
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied,

'Of all this will I nothing;' and so fell,  
And thus they bore her swooning to her  
tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black  
walls of yew  
Their talk had pierced, her father: 'Ay, a  
flash,  
I fear me, that will strike my blossom  
dead.  
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.  
I pray you, use some rough courtesy  
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,  
'That were against me: what I can I will;  
And there that day remain'd, and toward  
even  
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the  
maid,  
Stript off the case, and gave the naked  
shield;  
Then, when she heard his horse upon the  
stones,  
Unclasping flung the casement back, and  
look'd  
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve  
had gone.  
And Lancelot knew the little clinking  
sound:  
And she by tact of love was well aware  
That Lancelot knew that she was looking  
at him.  
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his  
hand,  
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.  
This was the one courtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:  
His very shield was gone; only the case,  
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left  
But still she heard him, still his picture  
form'd  
And grew between her and the pictured  
wall.

Then came her father, saying in low tones,  
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.  
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace to  
thee,  
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all  
calm.  
But when they left her to herself again,  
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant  
field  
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the  
owls  
Wailing had power upon her, and she  
mixt

Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms  
Of evening and the moanings of the wind.  
And in those days she made a little song,  
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love  
and Death,'  
And sang it: sweetly could she make and  
sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in  
vain;  
And sweet is death who puts an end to  
pain:

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death  
must be:  
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to  
me.  
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade  
away;  
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless  
clay:  
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could  
be;  
I needs must follow death, who calls for  
me;  
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice,  
and this,  
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind  
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,  
and thought  
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of  
the house  
That ever shrieks before a death,' and  
call'd  
The father, and all three in hurry and  
fear  
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light  
of dawn  
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let me  
die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we  
know,

Repeating, till the word we know so well  
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,  
So dwelt the father on her face, and  
thought,

'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,  
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,  
Speaking a still good-morrow with her  
eyes.

At last she said: 'Sweet brothers, yester-  
night

I seem'd a curious little maid again,  
As happy as when we dwelt among the  
woods,

And when ye used to take me with the  
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat.  
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape  
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt  
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.  
And yet I cried because ye would not  
pass

Beyond it, and far up the shining flood  
Until we found the palace of the King.

And yet ye would not; but this night I  
dream'd  
That I was all alone upon the flood,  
And then I said, "Now shall I have my  
will!"  
And there I woke, but still the wish re-  
main'd.  
So let me hence that I may pass at last  
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,  
Until I find the palace of the King.  
There will I enter in among them all,  
And no man there will dare to mock at  
me;  
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at  
me,  
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse  
at me;  
Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells  
to me,  
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me  
one:  
And there the King will know me and my  
love,  
And there the Queen herself will pity me,  
And all the gentle court will welcome me,  
And after my long voyage I shall rest!

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child, ye  
seem  
Light-headed, for what force is yours to  
go  
So far, being sick? and wherefore would  
ye look  
On this proud fellow again, who scorns  
us all?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave  
and move,  
And bluster into stormy sobs and sav:  
'I never loved him: an I meet with him,  
I care not howsoever great he be,  
Then will I strike at him and strike him  
down;  
Give me good fortune, I will strike him  
dead,  
For this discomfort he hath done the  
house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply:  
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be  
wroth,  
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault  
Not to love me than it is mine to love  
Him of all men who seems to me the  
highest.'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing  
'highest?'—  
He meant to break the passion in her—  
'nay,  
Daughter, I know not what you call the  
highest;  
But this I know, for all the people know  
it,

He loves the Queen, and in an open shame;  
And she returns his love in open shame;  
If this be high, what is it to be low?

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:  
'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I  
For anger: these are slanders; never yet  
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.  
He makes no friend who never made a  
foe.

But now it is my glory to have loved  
One peerless, without stain: so let me  
pass,

My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,  
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best  
And greatest, tho' my love had no return:  
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,  
Thanks, but you work against your own  
desire;

For if I could believe the things you say  
I should but die the sooner: wherefore  
cease,

Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man  
Hither, and let me shrive me clean and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and  
gone,

She, with a face bright as for sin forgiven,  
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised  
A letter, word for word; and when he  
ask'd,

'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?  
Then will I bear it gladly,' she replied,  
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the  
world,

But I myself must bear it.' Then he  
wrote

The letter she devised; which being writ  
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and  
true,

Deny me not,' she said — 'ye never yet  
Denied my fancies — this, however strange,  
My latest: lay the letter in my hand  
A little ere I die, and close the hand  
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.  
And when the heat has gone from out my  
heart,

Then take the little bed on which I died  
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the  
Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen.  
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.  
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier  
To take me to the river, and a barge  
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.  
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.  
There surely I shall speak for mine own  
self,

And none of you can speak for me so well.  
And therefore let our dumb old man alone  
Go with me; he can steer and row, and he  
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased: her father promised; where-upon  
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death  
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.  
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh  
Her father laid the letter in her hand,  
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.  
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from under-ground,  
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows  
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier  
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone  
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,  
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.  
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,  
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,  
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.  
So those two brethren from the chariot took  
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,  
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung  
The silken case with braided blazonings,  
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her,  
'Sister, farewell forever,' and again,  
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.  
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,  
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood —  
In her right hand the lily, in her left  
The letter — all her bright hair streaming down —  
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold  
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white  
All but her face, and that clear-featured face  
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,  
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved  
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last  
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,  
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,  
With deaths of others, and almost his own,  
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds; for he saw  
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen  
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed  
With such and so unmoved a majesty  
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,

Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet  
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye  
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,  
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,  
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,  
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,  
They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd:  
'Queen,  
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,  
Take, what I had not won except for you,  
These jewels, and make me happy, making them  
An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,  
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's  
Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words;  
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin  
In speaking, yet O, grant my worship of it  
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words  
Perchance, we both can pardon; but, my Queen,  
I hear of rumors flying thro' your court.  
Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,  
Should have in it an absoluter trust  
To make up that defect: let rumors be:  
When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust  
That you trust me in your own nobleness,  
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away,  
the Queen  
Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine  
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,  
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;  
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand  
Received at once and laid aside the gems  
There on a table near her, and replied:

'It may be I am quicker of belief  
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.  
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.  
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,  
It can be broken easier. I for you  
This many a year have done despite and wrong  
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts  
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?  
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice  
their worth  
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.  
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts  
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!  
For her! for your new fancy. Only this  
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart.

I doubt not that, however changed, you  
keep  
So much of what is graceful: and myself  
Would shun to break those bounds of  
courtesy  
In which as Arthur's Queen I move and  
rule;  
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!  
A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.  
So pray you, add my diamonds to her  
pearls;  
Deck her with these; tell her, she shines  
me down:  
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's  
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck  
O, as much fairer—as a faith once fair  
Was richer than these diamonds—hers  
not mine—  
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,  
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my  
will—  
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,  
And, thro' the casement standing wide for  
heat,  
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and  
smote the stream.  
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as  
it were,  
Diamonds to meet them, and they past  
away.  
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half dis-  
dain  
At love, life, all things, on the window  
ledge,  
Close underneath his eyes, and right across  
Where these had fallen, slowly past the  
barge  
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat  
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst  
away  
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,  
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.  
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door;  
to whom,  
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,  
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes  
that ask'd,  
'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard  
face,  
As hard and still as is the face that men  
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken  
rocks  
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they  
said:  
'He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,  
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen,  
so fair!  
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh  
and blood?  
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?

For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,  
But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babble of the King, the  
King  
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the  
tongueless man  
From the half-face to the full eye, and  
rose  
And pointed to the damsel and the doors.  
So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale  
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;  
And reverently they bore her into hall.  
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd  
at her,  
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,  
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her;  
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,  
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this  
was all:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the  
Lake,  
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,  
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,  
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.  
I loved you, and my love had no return,  
And therefore my true love has been my  
death.  
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,  
And to all other ladies, I make moan:  
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.  
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,  
As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read;  
And ever in the reading lords and dames  
Wept, looking often from his face who  
read  
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,  
So touch'd were they, half-thinking that  
her lips  
Who had devised the letter moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them  
all:  
'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,  
Know that for this most gentle maiden's  
death  
Right heavy am I; for good she was and  
true,  
But loved me with a love beyond all love  
In women, whomsoever I have known.  
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;  
Not at my years, however it hold in youth,  
I swear by truth and knighthood that I  
gave  
No cause, not willingly, for such a love.  
To this I call my friends in testimony,  
Her brethren, and her father, who himself  
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,  
To break her passion, some courtesy  
Against my nature: what I could, I did.  
I left her and I bade her no farewell;

Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,  
I might have put my wits to some rough use,  
And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen—  
Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm:  
'Ye might at least have done her so much grace,  
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death.'

He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,  
He adding :

'Queen, she would not be content  
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.  
Then might she follow me thro' the world,  
she ask'd;

It could not be. I told her that her love  
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down,

To rise hereafter in a stiller flame  
Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,

More specially were he she wedded poor,  
Estate them with large land and territory  
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,  
To keep them in all joyance: more than this  
I could not; this she would not, and she died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd: 'O my knight,  
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,  
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,  
To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm  
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went  
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,  
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see  
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,  
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,  
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.  
And when the knights had laid her comely head

Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,  
Then Arthur spake among them: 'Let her tomb

Be costly, and her image thereupon,  
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet  
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.  
And let the story of her dolorous voyage  
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb  
In letters gold and azure!' which was wrought

Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames  
And people, from the high door streaming,  
brake

Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,  
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,

Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, 'Lancelot.  
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.'  
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,  
'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen,  
forgiven.'

But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,  
Approach'd him, and with full affection said:

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have  
Most joy and most affiance, for I know  
What thou hast been in battle by my side,  
And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt  
Strike down the lusty and long practised knight

And let the younger and unskill'd go by  
To win his honor and to make his name,  
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man  
Made to be loved; but now I would to God,

Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,  
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,  
By God for thee alone, and from her face,  
If one may judge the living by the dead,  
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,  
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man

Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons  
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,  
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot: 'Fair she was, my King,  
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.

To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,  
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—

Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love  
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said the King.

'Let love be free; free love is for the best:

And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,

What should be best, if not so pure a love  
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee  
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,  
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,  
And at the inrunning of a little brook

Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd  
The high reed wave, and lifted up his  
eyes  
And saw the barge that brought her moving  
down,  
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said  
Low in himself: 'Ah, simple heart and  
sweet,  
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love  
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for  
thy soul?  
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at  
last—  
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"  
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous  
pride?  
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,  
May not your crescent fear for name and  
fame  
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?  
Why did the King dwell on my name to  
me?  
Mine own name shames me, seeming a  
reproach,  
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake  
Caught from his mother's arms—the  
wondrous one  
Who passes thro' the vision of the night—  
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns  
Heard on the winding waters, eve and  
morn  
She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair, my  
child,  
As a king's son," and often in her arms  
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.  
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er  
it be!  
For what am I? what profits me my name  
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and  
have it:  
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain:  
Now grown a part of me: but what use  
in it?  
To make men worse by making my sin  
known?  
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?  
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man  
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must  
break  
These bonds that so defame me: not with-  
out  
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it?  
nay,  
Who knows? but if I would not, then may  
God,  
I pray him, send a sudden angel down  
To seize me by the hair and bear me  
far,  
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,  
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.'  
So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful  
pain,  
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

## THE HOLY GRAIL

[1869]

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess  
done  
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale  
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd  
the Pure,  
Had past into the silent life of prayer,  
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the  
cowl  
The helmet in an abbey far away  
From Camelot, there, and not long after,  
died.  
  
And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,  
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the  
rest,  
And honor'd him, and wrought into his  
heart  
A way by love that waken'd love within,  
To answer that which came: and as they  
sat  
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening  
half  
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn  
That puff'd the swaying branches into  
smoke  
Above them, ere the summer when he  
died,  
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:  
  
'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree  
smoke,  
Spring after spring, for half a hundred  
years;  
For never have I known the world without,  
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but  
thee,  
When first thou camest—such a courtesy  
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—I  
knew  
For one of those who eat in Arthur's  
hall;  
For good ye are and bad, and like to  
coins,  
Some true, some light, but every one of you  
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and  
now  
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table  
Round,  
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'  
  
'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such pas-  
sion mine.  
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail  
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,  
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle  
out  
Among us in the jousts, while women  
watch  
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spir-  
itual strength  
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail!—  
I trust  
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here  
too much  
We moulder—as to things without I  
mean—  
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of  
ours,  
Told us of this in our refectory,  
But spake with such a sadness and so  
low  
We heard not half of what he said. What  
is it?  
The phantom of a cup that comes and  
goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd  
Percivale.  
'The cup, the cup itself, from which our  
Lord  
Drank at the last sad supper with his  
own.  
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—  
After the day of darkness, when the dead  
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good  
saint  
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought  
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn  
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our  
Lord.  
And there awhile it bode; and if a man  
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at  
once,  
By faith, of all his ills. But then the  
times  
Grew to such evil that the holy cup  
Was caught away to heaven, and dis-  
appear'd.'

To whom the monk: 'From our old books  
I know  
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,  
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,  
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to  
build;  
And there he built with wattles from the  
marsh  
A little lonely church in days of yore,  
For so they say, these books of ours, but  
seem  
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.  
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a nun,  
And one no further off in blood from me  
Than sister; and if ever holy maid  
With knees of adoration wore the stone,  
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,  
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,  
With such a fervent flame of human love,  
Which, being rudely blunted, glanced and  
shot  
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise  
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And  
yet,

Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,  
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,  
And the strange sound of an adulterous  
race,  
Across the iron grating of her cell  
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the  
more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or  
what  
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,  
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,  
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,  
A legend handed down thro' five or six,  
And each of these a hundred winters old,  
From our Lord's time. And when King  
Arthur made  
His Table Round, and all men's hearts  
became  
Clean for a season, surely he had thought  
That now the Holy Grail would come  
again;  
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it  
would come,  
And heal the world of all their wicked-  
ness!  
"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might it  
come  
To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay,"  
said he,  
"I know not, for thy heart is pure as  
snow."  
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the  
sun  
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I  
thought  
She might have risen and floated when I  
saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with  
me.  
And when she came to speak, behold her  
eyes  
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,  
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,  
Beautiful in the light of holiness!  
And "O my brother Percivale," she said,  
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy  
Grail:  
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a  
sound  
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills  
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's  
use  
To hunt by moonlight;' and the slender  
sound  
As from a distance beyond distance grew  
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,  
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch  
with hand,  
Was like that music as it came; and then  
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver  
beam,

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,  
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,  
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed

With rosy colors leaping on the wall;  
And then the music faded, and the Grail  
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls

The rosy quiverings died into the night.  
So now the Holy Thing is here again  
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,

And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,

That so perchance the vision may be seen  
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this

To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd  
Always, and many among us many a week

Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,  
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved

Among us in white armor, Galahad.

"God make thee good as thou art beautiful!"

Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight;  
and none

In so young youth was ever made a knight

Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard

My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;  
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd

Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some  
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said

Begotten by enchantment — chatteringers they,  
Like birds of passage piping up and down,  
That gape for flies — we know not whence  
they come;

For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away

Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair

Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;

And out of this she plaited broad and long  
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread

And crimson in the belt a strange device,  
A crimson grail within a silver beam;  
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,

Saying: "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,  
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,  
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.  
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,  
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king

Far in the spiritual city :" and as she spake  
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes  
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind

On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle : O brother,  
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,

Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,  
And carven with strange figures; and in and out

The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll  
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.  
And Merlin call'd it "the Siege Perilous,"  
Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,

"No man could sit but he should lose himself :"

And once by inadvertence Merlin sat  
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he, Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom, Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself !"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,  
While the great banquet lay along the hall,  
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard

A cracking and a riving of the roofs,  
And rending, and a blast, and overhead  
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.  
And in the blast there smote along the hall  
A beam of light seven times more clear than day;

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail

All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,  
And none might see who bare it, and it past.

But every knight beheld his fellow's face  
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,  
And staring each at other like dumb men  
Stood, till I found a voice and swore a vow.

'I swear a vow before them all, that I,  
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride

A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,  
Until I found and saw it, as the nun  
My sister saw it; and Galahad swore the vow,

And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,  
sware,  
And Lancelot sware, and many among the  
knights,  
And Gawain sware, and louder than the  
rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking  
him,  
'What said the King? Did Arthur take  
the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale, 'the  
King,  
Was not in hall: for early that same day,  
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit bold,  
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall  
Crying on help: for all her shining hair  
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky  
arm  
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all  
she wore

Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn  
In tempest: so the King arose and went  
To smoke the scandalous hive of those  
wild bees

That made such honey in his realm. How-  
beit

Some little of this marvel he too saw,  
Returning o'er the plain that then began  
To darken under Camelot; whence the  
King

Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there! the  
roofs

Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-  
smoke!

Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the  
bolt!"

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,  
As having there so oft with all his knights  
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty  
hall,

Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!  
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,  
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,  
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,  
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing  
brook,

Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.  
And four great zones of sculpture, set  
betwixt

With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:  
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,  
And in the second men are slaying beasts,  
And on the third are warriors, perfect  
men,  
And on the fourth are men with growing  
wings,

And over all one statue in the mould  
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,  
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern  
Star.

And eastward fronts the statue, and the  
crown  
And both the wings are made of gold,  
and flame  
At sunrise till the people in far fields,  
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,  
Behold it, crying, "We have still a king."

'And, brother, had you known our hall  
within,  
Broader and higher than any in all the  
lands!

Where twelve great windows blazon Ar-  
thur's wars,  
And all the light that falls upon the board  
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of  
our King.

Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,  
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount  
and mere,

Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.  
And also one to the west, and counter to it,  
And blank: and who shall blazon it? when  
and how? —

O, there, perchance, when all our wars are  
done,  
The brand Excalibur will be cast away!

'So to this hall full quickly rode the  
King,

In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,  
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,  
wrapt

In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.  
And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw  
The golden dragon sparkling over all;  
And many of those who burnt the hold,  
their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with  
smoke and sear'd,

Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,  
Full of the vision, prest: and then the  
King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale," —  
Because the hall was all in tumult — some  
Vowing, and some protesting, — "what is  
this?"

'O brother, when I told him what had  
chanced,

My sister's vision and the rest, his face  
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,  
When some brave deed seem'd to be done  
in vain,

Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he  
cried,

"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the  
vow."

Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been  
here,

My King, thou wouldest have sworn." "Yea,  
yea," said he,

"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the  
Grail?"

'Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw  
the light,  
But since I did not see the holy thing,  
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw.'

'Then when he ask'd us, knight by  
knight, if any  
Had seen it, all their answers were as  
one:  
'Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn  
our vows.'

'Lo, now,' said Arthur, 'have ye seen  
a cloud?  
What go ye into the wilderness to see?'

'Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a  
voice  
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,  
'But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,  
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—  
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.'

'Ah, Galahad, Galahad,' said the King.  
"for such  
As thou art is the vision, not for these.  
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—  
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—  
A sign to maim this Order which I made.  
But ye that follow but the leader's bell,"—  
Brother, the King was hard upon his  
knights,—  
"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,  
And one hath sung and all the dumb will  
sing.

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne  
Five knights at once, and every younger  
knight,  
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot.  
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,  
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Per-  
civales!"—

For thus it pleased the King to range me  
close

After Sir Galahad;—"nay," said he, "but  
men

With strength and will to right the wrong'd,  
of power  
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,  
Knights that in twelve great battles  
splash'd and dyed

The strong White Horse in his own  
heathen blood—  
But one hath seen, and all the blind will  
see.

Go, since your vows are sacred, being  
made:

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my  
realm  
Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my  
knights,

Your places being vacant at my side,  
This chance of noble deeds will come and  
go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering  
fires

Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea  
most,

Return no more: ye think I show myself  
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us  
meet

The morrow morn once more in one full  
field

Of gracious pastime, that once more the  
King,

Before ye leave him for this quest, may  
count

The yet-unbroken strength of all his  
knights,

Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

'So when the sun broke next from  
underground,

All the great Table of our Arthur closed  
And clash'd in such a tourney and so  
full,

So many lances broken—never yet  
Had Camelot seen the like since Arthur  
came;

And I myself and Galahad, for a strength  
Was in us from the vision, overthrew

So many knights that all the people cried,  
And almost burst the barriers in their  
heat,

Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!"

'But when the next day brake from  
underground—

O brother, had you known our Came'lot.  
Built by old kings, age after age, so old  
The King himself had fears that it would  
fall,

So strange, and rich, and dim; for where  
the roofs

Totter'd toward each other in the sky,  
Met foreheads all along the street of those  
Who watch'd us pass; and lower, 'nd  
where the long

Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the  
necks

Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls.  
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers  
of flowers

Fell as we past; and men and boys astride  
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,  
At all the corners, named us each by  
name,

Calling "God speed!" but in the ways  
below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich and  
poor

Wept, and the King himself could hardly  
speak

For grief, and all in middle street the  
Queen.

Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd  
aloud,

"This madness has come on us for our sins."

So to the Gate of the Three Queens we came,

Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,

And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and thought

Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,

How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,

So many and famous names; and never yet

Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green,

For all my blood danced in me, and I knew

That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,

That most of us would follow wandering fires,

Came like a driving gloom across my mind.

Then every evil word I had spoken once,

And every evil thought I had thought of old,

And every evil deed I ever did,

Awoke and cried, "This quest is not for thee."

And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,

And I was thirsty even unto death;

And I, too, cried, "This quest is not for thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst

Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,

With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white

Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave

And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook

Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest here."

I said, "I am not worthy of the quest;"

But even while I drank the brook, and ate The goodly apples, all these things at once

Fell into dust, and I was left alone

And thirsting in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,

And kind the woman's eyes and innocent. And all her bearing gracious; and she rose

Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,

"Rest here;" but when I touch'd her, lo! she, too,

Fell into dust and nothing, and the house Became no better than a broken shed, And in it a dead babe; and also this Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.

Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the world,

And where it smote the plowshare in the field

The plowman left his plowing and fell down

Before it; where it glitter'd on her pail

The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down

Before it, and I knew not why, but thought "The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.

Then was I ware of one that on me moved In golden armor with a crown of gold

About a casque all jewels, and his horse In golden armor jewelled everywhere:

And on the splendor came, flashing me blind,

And seem'd to me the lord of all the world,

Being so huge. But when I thought he meant

To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too, Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came, And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,

Fell into dust, and I was left alone

And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill, And on the top a city wall'd: the spires Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven,

And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and these

Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percival!"

Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!"

And glad was I and clomb, but found at top

No man, nor any voice. And thence I past

Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw That man had once dwelt there; but there

I found

Only one man of an exceeding age.

"Where is that goodly company," said I,

"That so cried out upon me?" and he had Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,

"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke

Fell into dust and disappear'd, and I

Was left alone once more and cried in grief,  
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself  
And touch it, it will crumble into dust!"

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,  
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale  
Was lowest found a chapel, and thereby  
A holy hermit in a hermitage,  
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

"O son, thou hast not true humility,  
The highest virtue, mother of them all;  
For when the Lord of all things made  
Himself

Naked of glory for his mortal change,  
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine.'

And all her form shone forth with sudden light

So that the angels were amazed, and she Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star  
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;

But her thou hast not known: for what is this

Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?

Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself As Galahad." When the hermit made an end,

In silver armor suddenly Galahad shone Before us, and against the chapel door Laid lance and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.

And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst.

And at the sacring of the mass I saw The holy elements alone; but he, "Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,

The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine: I saw the fiery face as of a child That smote itself into the bread and went; And hither am I come; and never yet Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,

This holy thing, fail'd from my side, nor come

Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,

Fainter by day, but always in the night Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh

Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top

Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,

Shattering all evil customs everywhere, And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,

And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down, And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this Come victor. But my time is hard at hand, And hence I go; and one will crown me king Far in the spiritual city; and come thou too, For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine, Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew One with him, to believe as he believed. Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

'There rose a hill that none but man could climb, Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-courses — Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm Round us and death; for every moment glanced His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick The lightnings here and there to left and right Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,

Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death, Sprang into fire: and at the base we found

On either hand, as far as eye could see, A great black swamp and of an evil smell,

Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,

Not to be crost, save that some ancient king

Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,

A thousand piers ran into the great Sea. And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,

And every bridge as quickly as he crost Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens

Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd

Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first

At once I saw him far on the great Sea, In silver-shining armor starry-clear; And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud

And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat, If boat it were—I saw not whence it came,

And when the heavens open'd and blazed again  
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—  
And had he set the sail, or had the boat  
Become a living creature clad with wings?  
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung  
redder than any rose, a joy to me,  
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.

Then in a moment when they blazed again  
Opening, I saw the least of little stars  
Down on the waste, and straight beyond  
the star

I saw the spiritual city and all her spires  
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—  
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—  
Strike from the sea; and from the star  
there shot

A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there  
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail.  
Which never eyes on earth again shall  
see.

Then fell the floods of heaven drowning  
the deep,  
And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge

No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd  
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence

Taking my war-horse from the holy man,  
Glad that no phantom vext me more,  
return'd

To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for in sooth

These ancient books—and they would win thee—teem,

Only I find not there this Holy Grail,  
With miracles and marvels like to these,  
Not all unlike; which oftentimes I read,  
Who read but on my breviary with ease,  
Till my head swims, and then go forth and pass

Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,  
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest  
To these old walls—and mingle with our folk;

And knowing every honest face of theirs  
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,  
And every homely secret in their hearts,  
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,  
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,

And mirthful sayings, children of the place,

That have no meaning half a league away;  
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,

Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,

Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—  
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,  
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,  
No man, no woman?

Then Sir Percivale:  
'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,  
And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,

Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee  
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?

For after I had lain so many nights,  
A bed-mate of the snail and eft and snake,  
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan

And meagre, and the vision had not come;  
And then I chanced upon a goodly town  
With one great dwelling in the middle of it.

Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd  
By maidens each as fair as any flower;  
But when they led me into hall, behold,  
The princess of that castle was the one,  
Brother, and that one only, who had ever  
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old

A slender page about her father's hall,  
And she a slender maiden, all my heart  
Went after her with longing, yet we twain  
Had never kiss'd a kiss or vow'd a vow.  
And now I came upon her once again,  
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,

And all his land and wealth and state were hers.

And while I tarried, every day she set  
A banquet richer than the day before  
By me, for all her longing and her will  
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream  
That flash'd across her orchard underneath

Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,

And calling me the greatest of all knights,  
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,

And gave herself and all her wealth to me.

Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,  
That most of us would follow wandering fires,

And the quest faded in my heart. Anon,  
The heads of all her people drew to me,  
With supplication both of knees and tongue:

"We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight,  
Our Lady says it, and we well believe:

Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,  
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land.”  
O me, my brother! but one night my vow  
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,  
But wail’d and wept, and hated mine own  
self,

And even the holy quest, and all but her;  
Then after I was join’d with Galahad  
Cared not for her nor anything upon  
earth.’

Then said the monk: ‘Poor men, when  
yule is cold,  
Must be content to sit by little fires.  
And this am I, so that ye care for me  
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven  
That brought thee here to this poor house  
of ours  
Where all the brethren are so hard, to  
warm  
My cold heart with a friend: but O the  
pity  
To find thine own first love once more—  
to hold,  
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine  
arms,  
Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,  
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed!  
For we that want the warmth of double  
life,  
We that are plagued with dreams of some-  
thing sweet  
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich.—  
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthly-wise,  
Seeing I never stray’d beyond the cell,  
But live like an old badger in his earth,  
With earth about him everywhere, despite  
All fast and penance. Saw ye none be-  
side,  
None of your knights?’

‘Yea, so,’ said Percivale:  
One night my pathway swerving east, I saw  
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors  
All in the middle of the rising moon,  
And toward him spurr’d, and hail’d him,  
and he me,  
And each made joy of either; then he  
ask’d:  
“Where is he? hast thou seen him—Lance-  
lot?—Once,”  
Said good Sir Bors, “he dash’d across me—  
mad,  
And maddening what he rode; and when  
I cried,  
‘Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest  
So holy?’ Lancelot shouted, ‘Stay me not!  
I have been the sluggard, and I ride  
apace,  
For now there is a lion in the way!”  
So vanish’d.”

Then Sir Bors had ridden on  
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,  
Because his former madness, once the talk

And scandal of our table, had return’d;  
For Lancelot’s kith and kin so worship  
him  
That ill to him is ill to them, to Bors  
Beyond the rest: he well had been con-  
tent  
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have  
seen,  
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,  
Being so clouded with his grief and love,  
Small heart was his after the holy quest;  
If God would send the vision, well; if not,  
The quest and he were in the hands of  
Heaven.

‘And then, with small adventure met, Sir  
Bors  
Rode to the loneliest tract of all the realm,  
And found a people there among their  
craggs,  
Our race and blood, a remnant that were  
left  
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones  
They pitch up straight to heaven; and their  
wise men  
Were strong in that old magic which can  
trace  
The wandering of the stars, and scoff’d at  
him  
And this high quest as at a simple thing,  
Told him he follow’d—almost Arthur’s  
words—  
A mocking fire: “What other fire then be  
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom  
blows,  
And the sea rolls, and all the world is  
warm’d?”  
And when his answer chafed them, the  
rough crowd,  
Hearing he had a difference with their  
priests,  
Seized him, and bound and plunged him  
into a cell  
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden  
there  
In darkness thro’ innumerable hours  
He heard the hollow-ringring heavens sweep  
Over him till by miracle—what else?—  
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and  
fell,  
Such as no wind could move; and thro’  
the gap  
Glimmer’d the streaming scud: then came  
a night  
Still as the day was loud, and thro’ the gap  
The seven clear stars of Arthur’s Table  
Round—  
For, brother, so one night, because they roll  
Thro’ such a round in heaven, we named  
the stars,  
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—  
And these, like bright eyes of familiar  
friends,  
In on him shone: “And then to me, to me,”

Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,  
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself —  
Across the seven clear stars — O grace to me! —

In color like the fingers of a hand  
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail  
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd  
A sharp quick thunder." Afterwards, a maid,  
Who kept our holy faith among her kin  
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.

To whom the monk: 'And I remember now  
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was  
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;  
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:  
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,  
An outdoor sign of all the warmth within,  
Smiled with his lips — a smile beneath a cloud,  
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:  
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd  
The city, found ye all your knights return'd,  
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,  
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?"

Then answer'd Percivale: 'And that can I,  
Brother, and truly; since the living words  
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King  
Pass not from door to door and out again,  
But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd  
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode  
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,  
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,  
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones  
Raw that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the dais-throne,  
And those that had gone out upon the quest,  
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,  
And those that had not, stood before the King,  
Who, when he saw me, rose and bade me hail,  
Saying: "A welfare in thine eyes reproves  
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee  
On hill or plain, at sea or flooding ford.  
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late  
Among the strange devices of our kings,  
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,  
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us

Half-wrench'd a golden wing; but now —  
the quest,  
This vision — hast thou seen the Holy Cup,  
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast heard,  
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve  
To pass away into the quiet life,  
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd  
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this quest for thee?"

"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.  
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,  
Who made me sure the quest was not for me;  
For I was much a-wearied of the quest,  
But found a silk pavilion in a field,  
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale

Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,  
And blew my merry maidens all about  
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,  
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

'He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first  
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd  
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,  
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,  
Until the King espied him, saying to him,  
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true  
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;"  
and Bors,  
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:  
I saw it;" and the tears were in his eyes.

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest  
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;  
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,  
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;  
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the King,  
"my friend,  
Our mightiest, hath this quest avail'd for thee?"

"Our mightiest!" answered Lancelot,  
with a groan;  
"O King!" — and when he paused me thought I spied  
A dying fire of madness in his eyes —  
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,  
Happier are those that welter in their sin,  
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,  
Slime of the ditch; but in me lived a sin  
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,

Noble, and knightly in me twined and  
clung  
Round that one sin, until the wholesome  
flower  
And poisonous grew together, each as each,  
Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy  
knights  
Swere, I swear with them only in the hope  
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail  
They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I  
spake  
To one most holy saint, who wept and said  
That, save they could be pluck'd asunder,  
all  
My quest were but in vain; to whom I  
vow'd  
That I would work according as he will'd.  
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and  
strode  
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,  
My madness came upon me as of old,  
And whipt me into waste fields far away.  
There was I beaten down by little men,  
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my  
sword  
And shadow of my spear had been enow  
To scare them from me once; and then I  
came  
All in my folly to the naked shore,  
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse  
grasses grew;  
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,  
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,  
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,  
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea  
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand  
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens  
Were shaken with the motion and the  
sound.  
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a  
boat,  
Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain;  
And in my madness to myself I said,  
'I will embark and I will lose myself,  
And in the great sea wash away my sin.'  
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.  
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,  
And with me drove the moon and all the  
stars;  
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night  
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,  
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking  
up,  
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,  
A castle like a rock upon a rock,  
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,  
And steps that met the breaker! There  
was none  
Stood near it but a lion on each side  
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.  
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the  
stairs,

There drew my sword. With sudden-flar-  
ing manes  
Those two great beasts rose upright like  
a man,  
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between,  
And, when I would have smitten them,  
heard a voice,  
'Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the  
beasts  
Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with vio-  
lence  
The sword was dash'd from out my hand,  
and fell.  
And up into the sounding hall I past;  
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,  
No bench nor table, painting on the wall  
Or shield of knight, only the rounded moon  
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.  
But always in the quiet house I heard,  
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,  
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower  
To the eastward. Up I climb'd a thousand  
steps  
With pain; as in a dream I seem'd to climb  
For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,  
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,  
'Glory and joy and honor to our Lord  
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail!'  
Then in my madness I essay'd the door;  
It gave, and thro' a stormy glare, a heat  
As from a seven-times heated furnace, I,  
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,  
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd  
away —  
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,  
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around  
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and  
eyes!  
And but for all my madness and my sin,  
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw  
That which I saw; but what I saw was  
veil'd  
And cover'd, and this quest was not for  
me."

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot  
left  
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain — nay,  
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish  
words, —  
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,  
Now bolden'd by the silence of his King,—  
Well, I will tell thee: "O King, my liege,"  
he said,  
"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?  
When have I stinted stroke in fough'ten  
field?  
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,  
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men  
mad,  
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our  
least.  
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,

I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,  
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,  
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,  
Henceforward."

"Deafer," said the blameless King,  
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things,  
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,  
Being too blind to have desire to see.  
But if indeed there came a sign from  
heaven,  
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot, and Percivale,  
For these have seen according to their  
sight.  
For every fiery prophet in old times,  
And all the sacred madness of the bard,  
When God made music thro' them, could  
but speak  
His music by the framework and the  
chord;  
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

"Nay—but thou arrest, Lancelot: never  
yet  
Could all of true and noble in knight and  
man  
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,  
With such a closeness but apart there grew,  
Save that he were the swine thou spakest  
of,  
Some root of knighthood and pure nobie-  
ness;  
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its  
flower.

"And spake I not too truly, O my  
knights?  
Was I too dark a prophet when I said  
To those who went upon the Holy Quest  
That most of them would follow wander-  
ing fires,  
Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and  
gone,  
And left me gazing at a barren board,  
And a lean Order—scarce return'd a  
tithe—  
And out of those to whom the vision came  
My greatest hardly will believe he saw.  
Another hath beheld it afar off,  
And, leaving human wrongs to right them-  
selves,  
Cares but to pass into the silent life.  
And one hath had the vision face to face,  
And now his chair desires him here in vain,  
However they may crown him elsewhere.

"And some among you held that if the  
King  
Had seen the sight he would have sworn  
the vow:  
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard  
That which he rules, and is but as the  
hind  
To whom a space of land is given to plow,

Who may not wander from the allotted  
field  
Before his work be done, but, being done,  
Let visions of the night or of the day  
Come as they will; and many a time they  
come,  
Until this earth he walks on seems not  
earth,  
This light that strikes his eyeball is not  
light,  
This air that smites his forehead is not air  
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—  
In moments when he feels he cannot die,  
And knows himself no vision to himself,  
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One  
Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have  
seen."

'So spake the King: I knew not all he  
meant.'

### GUINEVERE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and  
sat  
There in the holy house at Almesbury  
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,  
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd  
Blur'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,  
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,  
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,  
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was  
still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight  
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast  
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,  
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this  
He chill'd the popular praises of the King  
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;  
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White  
Horse,  
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and  
sought  
To make disruption in the Table Round  
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds  
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims  
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all  
the court,  
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd  
the may,  
Had been—their wont—a-maying and re-  
turn'd,  
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,  
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall  
To spy some secret scandal if he might,  
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her  
best  
Enid and lissome Vivien, of her court  
The wildest and the worst; and more than  
this  
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by

Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand  
 Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,  
 So from the high wall and the flowering grove  
 Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,  
 And cast him as a worm upon the way;  
 But when he knew the prince tho' marr'd with dust,  
 He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,  
 Made such excuses as he might, and these  
 Full knightly without scorn: for in those days  
 No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;  
 But, if a man were halt, or hunch'd, in him  
 By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,  
 Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,  
 And he was answer'd softly by the King  
 And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot holp  
 To raise the prince, who rising twice or thrice  
 Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled,  
 and went:  
 But, ever after, the small violence done  
 Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,  
 As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long  
 A little bitter pool about a stone  
 On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told  
 This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd  
 Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,  
 Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries,  
 'I shudder, some one steps across my grave,'  
 Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed  
 She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,  
 Would track her guilt until he found, and hers  
 Would be for evermore a name of scorn.  
 Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,  
 Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,  
 Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye.  
 Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,  
 To help it from the death that cannot die,  
 And save it even in extremes, began  
 To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,  
 Beside the placid breathings of the King,  
 In the dead night, grim faces came and went  
 Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—  
 Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,  
 Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,

That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—  
 Held her awake: or if she slept she dream'd An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand  
 On some vast plain before a setting sun,  
 And from the sun there swiftly made at her  
 A ghastly something, and its shadow flew—  
 Before it till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—  
 When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,  
 And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it  
 Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.  
 And all this trouble did not pass but grew,  
 Till even the clear face of the guileless King,  
 And trustful courtesies of household life,  
 Became her bane; and at the last she said,  
 'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land;  
 For if thou tarry we shall meet again,  
 And if we meet again some evil chance  
 Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze  
 Before the people and our lord the King.'  
 And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,  
 And still they met and met. Again she said,  
 'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'  
 And then they were agreed upon a night—  
 When the good King should not be there—to meet  
 And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.  
 She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met  
 And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,  
 Low on the border of her couch they sat  
 Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,  
 A madness of farewells. And Modred brought  
 His creatures to the basement of the tower  
 For testimony; and crying with full voice,  
 'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,' aroused  
 Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike  
 Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell  
 Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,  
 And all was still. Then she, 'The end is come,  
 And I am shamed for ever,' and he said:  
 'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,  
 And fly to my strong castle over-seas:  
 There will I hide thee till my life shall end,  
 There hold thee with my life against the world.'

She answer'd: 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold  
me so?  
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.  
Would God that thou couldst hide me from  
myself!  
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou  
Unwedded; yet rise now, and let us fly,  
For I will draw me into sanctuary,  
And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her  
horse,  
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,  
And then they rode to the divided way,  
There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he  
past,  
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,  
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury  
Fled all night long by glimmering waste  
and weald,  
And heard the spirits of the waste and  
weald  
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard  
them moan:  
And in herself she moan'd, 'Too late, too  
late!'  
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the  
morn,  
A blot in heaven, the raven, flying high,  
Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a field  
of death;  
For now the heathen of the Northern Sea,  
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the  
court,  
Begin to slay the folk and spoil the land.'  
And when she came to Almesbury she  
spake  
There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine enemies  
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,  
Receive and yield me sanctuary, nor ask  
Her name to whom ye yield it till her time  
To tell you;' and her beauty, grace, and  
power  
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they  
spared  
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode  
For many a week, unknown, among the  
nuns,  
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,  
nor sought,  
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for  
shrift,  
But communed only with the little maid,  
Who pleased her with a babbling heed-  
lessness  
Which often lured her from herself; but  
now,  
This night, a rumor wildly blown about  
Came that Sir Modred had usurp'd the  
realm  
And leagued him with the heathen, while  
the King

Was waging war on Lancelot: then she  
thought,  
'With what a hate the people and the King  
Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon her  
hands  
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd  
No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late! so  
late!  
What hour, I wonder now?' and when she  
drew  
No answer, by and by began to hum  
An air the nuns had taught her: 'Late, so  
late!'  
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd  
up, and said,  
'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,  
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may  
weep.'  
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.  
'Late, late, so late! and dark the night  
and chill!  
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.  
'No light had we: for that we do repent,  
And learning this, the bridegroom will re-  
lent.  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.  
'No light: so late! and dark and chill the  
night!  
O, let us in, that we may find the light!  
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.  
'Have we not heard the bridegroom is so  
sweet?  
O, let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!  
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.  
So sang the novice, while full passion-  
ately,  
Her head upon her hands, remembering  
Her thought when first she came, wept the  
sad Queen.  
Then said the little novice prattling to her:  
'O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;  
But let my words—the words of one so  
small,  
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,  
And if I do not there is penance given—  
Comfort your sorrows; for they do not  
flow  
From evil done: right sure am I of that,  
Who see your tender grace and state-  
liness.  
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the  
King's,  
And weighing find them less; for gone is  
he  
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot  
there,  
Round that strong castle where he holds  
the Queen;

And Modred whom he left in charge of all.  
The traitor—Ah, sweet lady, the King's  
grief  
For his own self, and his own Queen, and  
realm.  
Must needs be thrice as great as any of  
ours!  
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great;  
For if there ever come a grief to me  
I cry my cry in silence, and have done:  
None knows it, and my tears have brought  
me good.  
But even were the griefs of little ones  
As great as those of great ones, yet this  
grief  
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,  
That, howsoever much they may desire  
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud;  
As even here they talk at Almesbury  
About the good King and his wicked  
Queen,  
And were I such a King with such a  
Queen,  
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,  
But were I such a King it could not be.'

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the  
Queen,  
'Will the child kill me with her innocent  
talk?'  
But openly she answer'd, 'Must not I,  
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,  
Grieve with the common grief of all the  
realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's  
grief,  
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life  
Hath wrought confusion in the Table  
Round  
Which good King Arthur founded, years  
ago,  
With signs and miracles and wonders, there  
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself  
again,  
'Will the child kill me with her foolish  
prate?'  
But openly she spake and said to her,  
'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,  
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables  
Round,  
Or what of signs and wonders, but the  
signs  
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously:  
'Yea, but I know: the land was full of  
signs  
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.  
So said my father, and himself was knight  
Of the great Table—at the founding of it,  
And rode thereto from Lyonesse; and he  
said

That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain  
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard  
Strange music, and he paused, and turn-  
ing—there,  
All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,  
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,  
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,  
He saw them—headland after headland  
flame  
Far on into the rich heart of the west:  
And in the light the white mermaiden  
swam,  
And strong man-breasted things stood from  
the sea,  
And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the  
land,  
To which the little elves of chasm and  
cleft  
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.  
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,  
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit  
woods,  
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy  
Come dashing down on a tall wayside  
flower,  
That shook beneath them as the thistle  
shakes  
When three gray linnets wrangle for the  
seed:  
And still at evenings on before his horse  
The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and  
broke  
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and  
broke  
Flying, for all the land was full of life.  
And when at last he came to Camelot,  
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand  
Swung round the lighted lantern of the  
hall;  
And in the hall itself was such a feast  
As never man had dream'd; for every  
knight  
Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served  
By hands unseen; and even as he said  
Down in the cellars merry bloated things  
Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the  
butts  
While the wine ran: so glad were spirits  
and men  
Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bit-  
terly,  
'Were they so glad? ill prophets were they  
all,  
Spirits and men: could none of them fore-  
see,  
Not even thy wise father with his signs  
And wonders, what has fallen upon the  
realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again:  
'Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father  
said,

Full many a noble war-song had he sung,  
Even in the presence of an enemy's fleet,  
Between the steep cliff and the coming  
wave;  
And many a mystic lay of life and death  
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,  
When round him bent the spirits of the  
hills  
With all their dewy hair blown back like  
flame.  
So said my father—and that night the  
bard  
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the  
King  
As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at  
those  
Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois:  
For there was no man knew from whence  
he came;  
But after tempest, when the long wave  
broke  
All down the thundering shores of Bude  
and Bos.,  
There came a day as still as heaven, and  
then  
They found a naked child upon the sands  
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,  
And that was Arthur; and they foster'd  
him  
Till he by miracle was approven King:  
And that his grave should be a mystery  
From all men, like his birth; and could he  
find  
A wōman in her womanhood as great  
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,  
The twain together well might change the  
world.  
But even in the middle of his song  
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the  
harp,  
And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would  
have fallen,  
But that they stay'd him up; nor would he  
tell  
His vision; but what doubt that he fore-  
saw  
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they have  
set her on,  
Our simple-seeming abbess and her nuns,  
To play upon me,' and bow'd her head nor  
spake.

Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd  
hands,  
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,  
Said the good nuns would check her gad-  
ding tongue  
Full o'ten, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem  
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,  
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales  
Which my good father told me, check me  
too'

Nor let me shame my father's memory,  
one  
Of noblest manners, tho' himself would  
say  
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,  
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers  
back,  
And left me; but of others who remain,  
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—  
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—  
But pray you, which had noblest, while you  
moved  
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the  
King?

Then the pale Queen look'd up and  
answer'd her:

'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,  
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same  
In open battle or the tilting-field  
Forbore his own advantage, and the King  
In open battle or the tilting-field  
Forbore his own advantage, and these two  
Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;  
For manners are not idle, but the fruit  
Of loyal nature and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such  
fair fruit?  
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-  
fold  
Less noble, being, as all rumor runs,  
The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the  
Queen:  
'O, closed about by narrowing nunnery-  
walls,  
What knowest thou of the world and all its  
lights  
And shadows, all the wealth and all the  
woe?  
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,  
Were for one hour less noble than himself,  
Pray for him that he scape the doom of  
fire,  
And weep for her who drew him to his  
doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for  
both;  
But I should all as soon believe that his,  
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,  
As I could think; sweet lady, yours would  
be  
Such as they are, were you the sinful  
Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt  
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where  
she would heal;  
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat  
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who  
cried:  
'Such as thou art be never maiden more

For ever! thou their tool! set on to plague  
And play upon and harry me, petty spy  
And traitress!' When that storm of anger  
brake

From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,  
White as her veil, and stood before the  
Queen

As tremulously as foam upon the beach  
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,  
And when the Queen had added, 'Get thee  
hence!'

Fled frightened. Then that other left alone  
Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,  
Saying in herself: 'The simple, fearful  
child

Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful  
guilt,

Simpler than any child, betrays itself.  
But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent!  
For what is true repentance but in thought—  
Not even in inmost thought to think again  
The sins that made the past so pleasant to  
us?

And I have sworn never to see him more,  
To see him more.'

And even in saying this,  
Her memory from old habit of the mind  
Went slipping back upon the golden days  
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot  
came,

Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,  
Ambassador, to yield her to his lord  
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead  
Of his and her retinue moving, they,  
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love  
And sport and tilts and pleasure,— for  
the time

Was may-time, and as yet no sin was  
dream'd,—

Rode under groves that look'd a paradise  
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth  
That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro'  
the earth,

And on from hill to hill, and every day  
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale  
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised  
For brief repast or afternoon repose  
By couriers gone before; and on again,  
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw  
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,  
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,  
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a  
trance,

And moving thro' the past unconsciously,  
Came to that point where first she saw the  
King

Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to  
find

Her journey done, glanced at him, thought  
him cold,

High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not  
like him,  
'Not like my Lancelot'—while she brooded  
thus

And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,  
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.  
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery  
ran,

Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King!' She  
sat

Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed  
feet

Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors  
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she  
fell,

And grovell'd with her face against the  
floor.

There with her milk-white arms and shad-  
owy hair

She made her face a darkness from the  
King,

And in the darkness heard his armed feet  
Pause by her; then came silence, then a  
voice,

Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's  
Denouncing judgment, but, tho' changed,  
the King's:

'Liest thou here so low, the child of one  
I honor'd, happy, dead before thy shame?  
Well is it that no child is born of thee.

The children born of thee are sword and  
fire,

Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,  
The craft of kindred and the godless hosts  
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern  
Sea;

Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right  
arm,

The mightiest of my knights, abode with  
me,

Have everywhere about this land of Christ  
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.  
And knowest thou now from whence I  
come — from him,

From waging bitter war with him; and he,  
That did not shun to smite me in worse  
way,

Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,  
He spared to lift his hand against the King  
Who made him knight: but many a knight  
was slain;

And many more and all his kith and kin  
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.

And many more when Modred raised revolt,  
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave  
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.  
And of this remnant will I leave a part,  
True men who love me still, for whom I  
live,

To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,  
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.  
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my  
death.

Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies  
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my  
doom.

Thou hast not made my life so sweet to  
me,

That I the King should greatly care to live;  
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.  
Bear with me for the last time while I  
show,  
Even for thy sake, the sin which thou hast  
sinn'd.

For when the Roman left us, and their law  
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways  
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a  
deed

Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.  
But I was first of all the kings who drew  
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all  
The realms together under me, their Head,  
In that fair Order of my Table Round,  
A glorious company, the flower of men,  
To serve as model for the mighty world,  
And be the fair beginning of a time.  
I made them lay their hands in mine and  
swear

To reverence the King, as if he were  
Their conscience, and their conscience as  
their King,

To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,  
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,  
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,  
To honor his own word as if his God's,  
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,  
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,  
And worship her by years of noble deeds,  
Until they won her; for indeed I knew  
Of no more subtle master under heaven  
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,  
Not only to keep down the base in man,  
But teach high thought, and amiable words  
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,  
And love of truth, and all that makes a  
man.

And all this thrrove before I wedded thee,  
Believing, "Lo, mine helpmate, one to feel  
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy!"  
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;  
Then came the sin of Tristran and Isolt;  
Then others, following these my mightiest  
knights,

And drawing foul ensample from fair  
names,

Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite  
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,  
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine  
I guard as God's high gift from scathe  
and wrong,

Not greatly care to lose; but rather think  
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,  
To sit once more within his lonely hall,  
And miss the wonted number of my  
knights,

And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds  
As in the golden days before thy sin,

For which of us who might be left could  
speak  
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at  
thee?

And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk  
Thy shadow still would glide from room  
to room,

And I should evermore be vext with thee  
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,  
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.  
For think not, tho' thou wouldest not love  
thy lord,

Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.  
I am not made of so slight elements.  
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.  
I hold that man the worst of public foes  
Who either for his own or children's sake,  
To save his blood from scandal, lets the  
wife

Whom he knows false abide and rule the  
house:

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd  
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,  
She like a new disease, unknown to men,  
Creeps, no precaution used, among the  
crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and  
saps

The fealty of our friends, and stirs the  
pulse  
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the  
young.

Worst of the worst were that man he that  
reigns!

Better the King's waste hearth and aching  
heart

Than thou reseated in thy place of light,  
The mockery of my people and their bane!

He paused, and in the pause she crept an  
inch

Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.  
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.

Then waiting by the doors the war-horse  
neigh'd

As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy  
crimes;

I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,  
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die  
To see thee, laying there thy golden head.  
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.  
The wrath which forced my thoughts on  
that fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming  
death,—

When first I learnt thee hidden here,—is  
past.

The pang — which, while I weigh'd thy  
heart with one

Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,  
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.  
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,

Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God  
Forgives! do thou for thine own soul the  
rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved?  
O golden hair, with which I used to play  
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,  
And beauty such as never woman wore,  
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—  
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,  
But Lancelot's; nay, they never were the  
King's.

I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,  
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine  
own flesh,

Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,  
"I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,  
For I was ever virgin save for thee,  
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my  
life

So far that my doom is, I love thee still.  
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.  
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,  
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,  
Hereafter in that world where all are pure  
We two may meet before high God, and  
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and  
know

I am thine husband — not a smaller soul,  
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,  
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I  
hence.

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet  
blow:

They summon me their King to lead mine  
hosts

Far down to that great battle in the west,  
Where I must strike against the man they  
call

My sister's son — no kin of mine, who  
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,  
and knights,

Traitors — and strike him dead, and meet  
myself

Death, or I know not what mysterious  
doom.

And thou remaining here wilt learn the  
event;

But hither shall I never come again,  
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more —  
Farewell!

And while she grovell'd at his feet,  
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her  
neck,  
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head  
Perceived the waving of his hands that  
blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps  
were gone,  
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish  
found

The casement: 'peradventure,' so she  
thought,

'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'  
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!  
And near him the sad nuns with each a  
light

Stood, and he gave them charge about the  
Queen,

To guard and foster her for evermore.  
And while he spake to these his helm was  
lower'd,

To which for crest the golden dragon  
clung

Of Britain; so she did not see the face,  
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,  
Wet with the mists and smitten by the  
lights,

The Dragon of the great Pendragonship  
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.  
And even then he turn'd; and more and  
more

The moony vapor rolling round the King,  
Who seem'd the phantom of a giant in it,  
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him  
gray

And grayer, till himself became as mist  
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and  
cried aloud,  
'O Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,  
Then — as a stream that spouting from a  
cliff

Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base  
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the  
vale —

Went on in passionate utterance:

'Gone — my lord!  
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!  
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.  
Farewell? I should have answer'd his fare-  
well.

His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the  
King,

My own true lord! how dare I call him  
mine?

The shadow of another cleaves to me,  
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,  
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?  
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,  
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;  
No, nor by living can I live it down.  
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to  
months,

The months will add themselves and make  
the years,

The years will roll into the centuries,  
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.  
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.  
Let the world be; that is but of the world—  
What else? what hope? I think there was  
a hope,

Except he mock'd me when he spake of  
hope;  
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,  
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.  
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven  
My wickedness to him, and left me hope  
That in mine own heart I can live down sin  
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens  
Before high God! Ah great and gentle lord,  
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint  
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—  
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that  
took

Full easily all impressions from below,  
Would not look up, or half-despised the  
height  
To which I would not or I could not  
climb—

I thought I could not breathe in that fine  
air,

That pure severity of perfect light—  
I yearn'd for warmth and color which I  
found

In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,  
Thou art the highest and most human too,  
Not Lancelot, nor another. 'Is there none  
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?  
Now—ere he goes to the great battle?

none:

Myself must tell him in that purer life,  
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,  
What might I not have made of thy fair  
world,

Had I but loved thy highest creature here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest;  
It surely was my profit had I known;  
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.  
We needs must love the highest when we  
see it,

Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand  
Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd  
and saw  
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to  
her,  
'Yea, little maid, for am I not forgiven?'  
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns  
All round her, weeping; and her heart was  
loosed  
Within her, and she wept with these and  
said:

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who  
broke  
The vast design and purpose of the King.  
O, shut me round with narrowing nunnery-  
walls,  
Meek maidens, from the voices crying,  
"Shame!"  
I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.  
Let no one dream but that he loves me  
still.  
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,

Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;  
Wear black and white, and be a nun like  
you,

Fast with your fasts, not feasting with  
your feasts;  
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at  
your joys,  
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;  
Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your  
shrines;

Do each low office of your holy house;  
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole  
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes  
Who ransom'd us, and halter too than I;  
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal  
mine own;

And so wear out in alms-deed and in prayer  
The sombre close of that voluptuous day  
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the  
King.'

She said: they took her to themselves,  
and she  
Still hoping, fearing, 'is it yet too late?'  
Dwelt with them, till in time their abbess  
died.

Then she, for her good deeds and her pure  
life,  
And for the power of ministration in her,  
And likewise for the high rank she had  
borne,  
Was chosen abbess, there, an abbess, lived  
For three brief years, and there, an abbess,  
past

To where beyond these voices there is peace.

### THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

[1869]

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,  
First made and latest left of all the knights,  
Told, when the man was no more than  
a voice

In the white winter of his age, to those  
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other  
minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedi-  
vere,  
Who slowly paced among the slumbering  
host,  
Heard in his tent the moanings of the  
King:

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,  
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His  
fields,  
But in His ways with men I find Him  
not.'

I waged His wars, and now I pass and  
die.  
O me! for why is all around us here  
As if some lesser god had made the  
world,

But had not force to shape it as he would,  
Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
And enter it, and make it beautiful?  
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,  
But that these eyes of men are dense  
and dim,  
And have not power to see it as it is:  
Perchance, because we see not to the close:—  
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,  
And have but stricken with the sword in vain  
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend  
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm  
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.  
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death:  
Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,  
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd  
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown  
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear  
Went shrilling: 'Hollow, hollow all delight!  
Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.  
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.  
And I am blown along a wandering wind,  
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight!  
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change  
Their season in the night and wail their way  
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind  
the dream  
Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries  
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,  
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,  
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail  
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd:  
'Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,  
Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries  
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild  
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:  
'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,

Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;  
But in their stead thy name and glory cling  
To all high places like a golden cloud  
For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.  
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death  
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;  
And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—  
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,  
And with him many of thy people, and knights  
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown  
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.  
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.  
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
'Far other is this battle in the west  
Whereto we move than when we strove in youth,  
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,  
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,  
And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom is mine  
To war against my people and my knights.  
The king who fights his people fights himself.  
And they my knights, who loved me once,  
the stroke  
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.  
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way  
Thro' this blind haze which, ever since I saw  
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,  
Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,  
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league,  
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—  
A land of old upheaven from the abyss  
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;  
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,  
And the long mountains ended in a coast  
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away  
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.  
There the pursuer could pursue no more,  
And he that fled no further fly the King;  
And there, that day when the great light of heaven  
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,  
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.

Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight  
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the  
west.  
A death-white mist slept over sand and  
sea,  
Whereof the chilf, to him who breathed it,  
drew  
Down with his blood, till all his heart was  
cold  
With formless fear; and even on Arthur  
fell  
Confusion, since he saw not whom he  
fought.  
For friend and foe were shadows in the  
mist,  
And friend slew friend not knowing whom  
he slew;  
And some had visions out of golden  
youth,  
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts  
Look in upon the battle; and in the mist  
Was many a noble deed, many a base,  
And chance and craft and strength in single  
fights,  
And ever and anon with host to host  
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard  
mail hewn,  
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands,  
the crash  
Of battle-axes on shatter'd helms, and  
shrieks  
After the Christ, of those who falling  
down  
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the  
mist;  
And shouts of heathen and the traitor  
knights,  
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-  
phemies,  
Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the  
lungs  
In that close mist, and cryings for the  
light,  
Moans of the dying, and voices of the  
dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after  
wail  
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro'  
death  
Or death-like swoon, thus over all that  
shore,  
Save for some whisper of the seething  
seas,  
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous  
day  
Grew drearier toward twilight falling,  
came  
A bitter wind, clear from the north, and  
blew  
The mist aside, and with that wind the  
tide

Rose, and the pale King glanced across  
the field  
Of battle; but no man was moving there;  
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,  
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave  
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro  
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and  
down  
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,  
And shiver'd brands that once had fought  
with Rome,  
And rolling far along the gloomy shores  
The voice of days of old and days to be.  
Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,  
And whiter than the mist that all day long  
Had held the field of battle was the King:  
'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes  
the world,  
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we  
move,  
And beats upon the faces of the dead,  
My dead, as tho' they had not died for  
me? —  
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fallen  
Confusion; till I know not what I am,  
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be  
king;  
Behold, I seem but king among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: 'My  
King;  
King everywhere! and so the dead have  
kings,  
There also will I worship thee as king.  
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I  
live  
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he  
that brought  
The heathen back among us, yonder  
stands,  
Modred, unharmed, the traitor of thine  
house.'

Then spake the King: 'My house hath  
been my doom.  
But call not thou this traitor of my house  
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with  
me.  
My house are rather they who sware my  
vows,  
Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me  
king.  
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,  
When all the purport of my throne hath  
fail'd,  
That quick or dead thou holdest me for  
king.  
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;  
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou  
see  
Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the  
King

Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege  
 Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword  
 Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,  
 Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,  
 Slew him, and, all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd  
 Among the mountains by the winter sea;  
 Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,  
 Had fallen in Lyonesse about their lord,  
 King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,  
 The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,  
 And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,  
 A broken chancel with a broken cross,  
 That stood on a dark strait of barren land:

On one side lay the Ocean, and on one  
 Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
 'The sequel of to-day unsolders all  
 The goodliest fellowship of famous knights  
 Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep  
 They sleep — the men I loved. I think  
 that we shall never more, at any future time,  
 Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,  
 Walking about the gardens and the halls  
 Of Camelot, as in the days that were.  
 I perish by this people which I made, —  
 Tho' Merlin swore that I should come again  
 To rule once more; but, let what will be,

I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm  
 That without help I cannot last till morn.  
 Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,  
 Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how

In those old days, one summer noon, an arm

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
 Holding the sword — and how I row'd across

And took it, and have worn it, like a king;

And, wheresoever I am sung or told  
 In aftertime, this also shall be known.  
 But now delay not: take Excalibur,  
 And fling him far into the middle mere;  
 Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,

Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm —  
 A little thing may harm a wounded man;  
 Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,  
 Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,  
 And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
 Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
 Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
 Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down  
 By zigzag paths and juts of pointed rock,  
 Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
 And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,  
 Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth  
 And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;  
 For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,  
 Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work  
 Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long  
 That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,  
 This way and that dividing the swift mind,  
 In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd  
 Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd  
 There in the many-knotted water-flags,  
 That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.  
 So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:  
 'Hast thou perform'd my mission which  
 I gave?  
 What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
 'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,  
 And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:  
 'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,  
 Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;  
 For surer sign had follow'd, either hand, Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.  
 This is a shameful thing for men to lie.  
 Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,  
 As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing  
 I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time  
Across the ridge, and paced beside the  
mere,  
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixt in thought;  
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,  
How curiously and strangely chased, he  
smote  
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,  
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,  
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,  
Which might have pleased the eyes of many  
men.'

What good should follow this, if this were  
done?

What harm, undone? Deep harm to dis-  
obey.

Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.  
Were it well to obey then, if a king de-  
mand

An act unprofitable, against himself?  
The King is sick, and knows not what he  
does.

What record or what relic of my lord  
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath  
And rumors of a doubt? But were this  
kept,

Stored in some treasure-house of mighty  
kings,

Some one might show it at a joust of arms,  
Saying: "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,  
Wrought by the lonely Maiden of the Lake.  
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the  
deeps

Upon the hidden bases of the hills."

So might some old man speak in the after-  
time

To all the people, winning reverence.  
But now much honor and much fame were  
lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own con-  
ceit,  
And hid Excalibur the second time,  
And so strode back slow to the wounded  
King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing  
heavily:  
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast  
heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in  
wrath:

'Ah miserable, and unkind, untrue,  
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!  
Authority forgets a dying king,  
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye  
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou  
art,

For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,  
In whom should meet the offices of all,  
Thou wouldest betray me for the precious  
hilt;

Either from lust of gold, or like a girl  
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.  
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,  
And the third time may prosper, get thee  
hence:

But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,  
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,  
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,  
plunged

Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the  
sword,  
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The  
great brand  
Made lightnings in the splendour of the  
moon,

And flashing round and round, and whirl'd  
in an arch,  
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,  
Seen where the moving isles of winter  
shock

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.  
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur;  
But ere he dip't the surface, rose an arm  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd  
him

Three times, and drew him under in the  
mere.

And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker  
breath:

'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.  
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or  
seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the  
gems

Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,  
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,  
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,  
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.

Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-  
ing him;

But when I look'd again, behold an arm,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,  
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd  
him

Three times, and drew him under in the  
mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breath-  
ing hard:

'My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were  
gone.  
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my  
weight,

And bear me to the margin; yet I fear  
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half  
rose,  
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,  
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes  
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere  
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,  
And would have spoken, but he found not  
words;  
Then took with care, and kneeling on one  
knee,  
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid  
hands,  
And rising bore him thro' the place of  
tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted  
hard,  
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed  
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd  
the King,  
Muttering and murmuring at his ear,  
'Quick, quick!  
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'  
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to  
ridge,  
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he  
walk'd,  
Larger than human on the frozen hills.  
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
Before. His own thought drove him like  
a goad.  
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves  
And barren chasms, and all to left and  
right  
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as  
he based  
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed  
heels—  
And on a sudden, lo, the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon!

Then saw they how there hove a dusky  
barge,  
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,  
Beneath them; and descending they were  
ware  
That all the decks were dense with stately  
forms,  
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—  
by these  
Three queens with crowns of gold: and  
from them rose  
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,  
And, as it were one voice, an agony  
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills  
All night in a waste land, where no one  
comes,  
Or hath come, since the making of the  
world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the  
barge.'  
So to the barge they came. There those  
three queens  
Put forth their hands, and took the King,  
and wept.  
But she that rose the tallest of them all  
And fairest laid his head upon her lap,  
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed  
his hands,  
And call'd him by his name, complaining  
loud,  
And dropping bitter tears against a brow  
Striped with dark blood: for all his face  
was white  
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon  
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing  
east;  
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd  
with drops  
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—  
That made his forehead like a rising sun  
High from the dais-throne — were parch'd  
with dust,  
Or clotted into points and hanging loose,  
Mixt with the knightly growth that fringed  
his lips.  
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;  
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in  
rest,  
From spur to plume a star of tournament,  
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged  
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:  
'Ah! my lord Arthur, whither shall I go?  
Where shall I hide my forehead and my  
eyes?  
For now I see the true old times are dead,  
When every morning brought a noble  
chance,  
And every chance brought out a noble  
knight.  
Such times have been not since the light  
that led  
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.  
But now the whole Round Table is dis-  
solved  
Which was an image of the mighty world,  
And I, the last, go forth companionless,  
And the days darken round me, and the  
years,  
Among new men, strange faces, other  
minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the  
barge:  
'The old order changeth, yielding place to  
new,  
And God fulfils himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the  
world.  
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?

I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
 May He within himself make pure! but thou,  
 If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
 Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
 Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
 Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
 For what are men better than sheep or goats  
 That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
 If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
 Both for themselves and those who call them friend?  
 For so the whole round earth is every way  
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.  
 But now farewell. I am going a long way  
 With these thou seest—if indeed I go—  
 For all my mind is clouded with a doubt—  
 To the island-valley of Avilion;  
 Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,  
 Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies  
 Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns  
 And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,  
 Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail  
 Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan  
 That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,  
 Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood  
 With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere  
 Revolving many memories, till the hull  
 Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,  
 And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,  
 The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn  
 Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone.'  
 And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,  
 'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly climb  
 The last hard footstep of that iron crag,  
 Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,  
 and cried:  
 'He passes to be king among the dead,

And after healing of his grievous wound  
 He comes again; but—if he come no more—  
 O me, be yon dark queens in yon black boat,  
 Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed  
 On that high day, when, clothed with living light,  
 They stood before his throne in silence, friends  
 Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint  
 As from beyond the limit of the world,  
 Like the last echo born of a great cry,  
 Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice  
 Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and climb  
 Even to the highest he could climb, and saw,  
 Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,  
 Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,  
 Down that long water opening on the deep  
 Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go  
 From less to less and vanish into light.  
 And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

#### SONG FROM THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

[1859]

TURN, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;  
 Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;  
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;  
 With that wild wheel we go not up or down;  
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;  
 Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;  
 For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;  
 Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;  
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

## SONG FROM MERLIN AND VIVIEN

[1859]

IN love, if love be 'love, if love be ours,  
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal  
powers:  
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

It is the little rift within the lute,  
That by and by will make the music mute,  
And ever widening slowly silence all.

The little rift within the lover's lute,  
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,  
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

It is not worth the keeping; let it go:  
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.  
And trust me not at all or all in all.

## SONG FROM QUEEN MARY

[1875]

LOW, LUTE, LOW!

HAPLESS doom of woman happy in betrothing!  
Beauty passes like a breath, and love is lost  
in loathing.  
Low, my lute; speak low, my lute, but say  
the world is nothing—  
Low, lute, low!

Love will hover round the flowers when  
they first awaken;  
Love will fly the fallen leaf, and not be  
overtaken.  
Low, my lute! O, low, my lute! we fade  
and are forsaken—  
Low, dear lute, low!

## THE VOICE AND THE PEAK

[1874]

THE voice and the Peak,  
Far over summit and lawn,  
The lone glow and long roar  
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of  
dawn!

All night have I heard the voice  
Rave over the rocky bar,  
But thou wert silent in heaven,  
Above thee glided the star.

Hast thou no voice, O Peak,  
That standest high above all?  
I am the voice of the Peak,  
I roar and rave, for I fall.

'A thousand voices go  
To North, South, East, and West;  
They leave the heights and are troubled,  
And moan and sink to their rest.

The fields are fair beside them,  
The chestnut towers in his bloom;  
But they—they feel the desire of the  
deep—  
Fall, and follow their doom.

The deep has power on the height,  
And the height has power on the deep:  
They are raised for ever and ever,  
And sink again into sleep.'

Not raised for ever and ever,  
But when their cycle is o'er,  
The valley, the voice, the peak, the star  
Pass, and are found no more.

The Peak is high and flush'd  
At his highest with sunrise fire;  
The Peak is high, and the stars are high,  
And the thought of a man is higher.

A deep below the deep,  
And a height beyond the height!  
Our hearing is not hearing,  
And our seeing is not sight.

The voice and the Peak  
Far into heaven withdrawn,  
The lone glow and long roar  
Green-rushing from the rosy thrones of  
dawn!

*First part of my poem*  
*THE REVENGE*  
*Second part*  
*A BALLAD OF THE FLEET*  
*Third part*  
*"British & Foreign"*  
[1878]

I  
AT Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,  
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from far away;  
"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!"  
Then swore Lord Thomas Howard: "'Fore God I am no coward;  
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,  
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.  
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?"

II  
Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: "I know you are no coward;  
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.  
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.  
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,  
To these Inquisition dogs and the devil-domes of Spain."

## III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships  
of war that day,  
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent  
summer heaven;  
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick  
men from the land  
Very carefully and slow,  
Men of Bideford in Devon,  
And we laid them on the ballast down  
below:  
For we brought them all aboard,  
And they blest him in their pain, that  
they were not left to Spain,  
To the thumb-screw and the stake, for  
the glory of the Lord.

## IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work  
the ship and to fight,  
And he sailed away from Flores till the  
Spaniard came in sight,  
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon  
the weather bow.  
"Shall we fight or shall we fly?  
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,  
For to fight is but to die!  
There 'll be little of us left by the time  
this sun be set."  
And Sir Richard said again: "We be all  
good English men.  
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the  
children of the devil,  
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or  
devil yet."

## V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and so  
we roar'd a hurrah, and so  
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the  
heart of the foe,  
With her hundred fighters on deck, and  
her ninety sick below;  
For half of their fleet to the right and  
half to the left were seen,  
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the  
long sea-lane between.

## VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down  
from their decks and laugh'd,  
Thousands of their seamen made mock  
at the mad little craft  
Running on and on, till delay'd  
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of  
fifteen hundred tons,  
And up-shadowing high above us with  
her yawning tiers of guns,  
Took the breath from our sails, and we  
stay'd.

## VII

And while now the great San Philip hung  
above us like a cloud  
Whence the thunderbolt will fall  
Long and loud,

Four galleons drew away  
From the Spanish fleet that day,  
And two upon the larboard and two upon  
the starboard lay,  
And the battle-thunder broke from them  
all.

## VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she be-  
thought herself and went  
Having that within her womb that had left  
her ill content;  
And the rest they came aboard us, and  
they fought us hand to hand,  
For a dozen times they came with their  
pikes and musqueteers,  
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a  
dog that shakes his ears  
When he leaps from the water to the  
land.

## IX

And the sun went down, and the stars  
came out far over the summer sea,  
But never a moment ceased the fight of  
the one and the fifty-three.  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their  
high-built galleons came,  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with  
her battle-thunder and flame:  
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew  
back with her dead and her shame.  
For some were sunk and many were  
shatter'd, and so could fight us no  
more—  
God of battles, was ever a battle like this  
in the world before?

## X

For he said, "Fight on! fight on!"  
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;  
And it chanced that, when half of the  
short summer night was gone,  
With a grisly wound to be drest he had  
left the deck,  
But a bullet struck him that was dress-  
ing it suddenly dead,  
And himself he was wounded again in  
the side and the head,  
And he said, "Fight on! fight on!"

## XI

And the night went down, and the sun  
smiled out far over the summer sea,  
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides  
lay round us all in a ring;  
But they dared not touch us again, for  
they fear'd that we still could sting.  
So they watch'd what the end would be.  
And we had not fought them in vain,  
But in perilous plight were we,  
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were  
slain,  
And half of the rest of us maim'd for  
life  
In the crash of the cannonades and the  
desperate strife;

And the sick men down in the hold were  
most of them stark and cold,  
And the pikes were all broken or bent,  
and the powder was all of it spent;  
And the masts and the rigging were lying  
over the side;  
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride:  
"We have fought such a fight for a day  
and a night  
As may never be fought again!  
We have won great glory, my men!  
And a day less or more  
At sea or ashore,  
We die—does it matter when?  
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink  
her, split her in twain!  
Fall into the hands of God, not into the  
hands of Spain!"

## XII

And the gunner said, "Ay, ay," but the  
seamen made reply:  
"We have children, we have wives,  
And the Lord hath spared our lives.  
We will make the Spaniard promise, if  
we yield, to let us go;  
We shall live to fight again and to strike  
another blow."  
And the lion there lay dying, and they  
yielded to the foe.

## XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their  
flagship bore him then,  
Where they laid him by the mast, old  
Sir Richard caught at last,  
And they praised him to his face with  
their courtly foreign grace;  
But he rose upon their decks, and he  
cried:  
"I have fought for Queen and Faith like  
a valiant man and true;  
I have only done my duty as a man is  
bound to do.  
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Gren-  
ville die!"  
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

## XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been  
so valiant and true,  
And had holden the power and glory of  
Spain so cheap  
That he dared her with one little ship  
and his English few;  
Was he devil or man? He was devil for  
aught they knew,  
But they sank his body with honor down  
into the deep,  
And they mann'd the Revenge with a  
swarthier alien crew,  
And away she sail'd with her loss and  
long'd for her own;  
When a wind from the lands they had  
ruin'd awoke from sleep,

And the water began to heave and the  
weather to moan,  
And or ever that evening ended a great  
gale blew,  
And a wave like the wave that is raised  
by an earthquake grew,  
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails,  
and their masts and their flags,  
And the whole sea plunged and fell on  
the shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,  
And the little Revenge herself went down  
by the island crags  
To be lost evermore in the main.

## RIZPAH - Billie

*at Lewis  
Sentimentality  
like love to  
the dead Adam.*

17—  
[1880]

I

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over  
land and sea—  
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother,  
come out to me!"  
Why should he call me to-night, when  
he knows that I cannot go?  
For the downs are as bright as day, and  
the full moon stares at the snow.

## II

We should be seen, my dear; they would  
spy us out of the town.  
The loud black nights for us, and the  
storm rushing over the down,  
When I cannot see my own hand, but  
am led by the creak of the chain,  
And grovel and grope for my son till I  
find myself drenched with the rain.

## III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was  
there left to fall?  
I have taken them home, I have num-  
ber'd the bones, I have hidden them  
all.  
What am I saying? and what are you?  
do you come as a spy?  
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the  
tree falls so must it lie.

## IV

Who let her in? how long has she been?  
you—what have you heard?  
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have  
spoken a word.  
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—  
none of their spies—  
But the night has crept into my heart,  
and begun to darken my eyes.

## V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what  
should you know of the night,  
The blast and the burning shame and  
the bitter frost and the fright?

I have done it, while you were asleep—  
you were only made for the day.  
I have gather'd my baby together—and  
now you may go your way.

## VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, madam, to sit  
by an old dying wife.  
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have  
only an hour of life.  
I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he  
went out to die.  
"They dared me to do it," he said, and  
he never has told me a lie.  
I whipped him for robbing an orchard  
once when he was but a child—  
"The farmer dared me to do it," he said;  
he was always so wild—  
And idle—and could n't be idle—my  
Willy—he never could rest.  
The King should have made him a sol-  
dier, he would have been one of his  
best.

## VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates,  
and they never would let him be good;  
They swore that he dare not rob the mail,  
and he swore that he would;  
And he took no life, but he took one  
purse, and when all was done  
He flung it among his fellows—"I 'll none  
of it," said my son.

## VIII

I came into court to the judge and the  
lawyers. I told them my tale,  
God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they  
kill'd him for robbing the mail.  
They hang'd him in chains for a show—  
we had always borne a good name—  
To be hang'd for a thief—and then put  
away—is n't that enough shame?  
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide!  
but they set him so high  
That all the ships of the world could  
stare at him, passing by.  
God 'll pardon the hell-black raven and  
horrible fowls of the air,  
But not the black heart of the lawyer  
who kill'd him and hang'd him there.

## IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had  
bid him my last good-bye;  
They had fasten'd the door of his cell. "O  
mother!" I heard him cry.  
I could n't get back tho' I tried, he had  
something further to say,  
And now I never shall know it. The  
jailer forced me away.

## X

Then since I could n't but hear that cry  
of my boy that was dead,  
They seized me and shut me up: they  
fasten'd me down on my bed.

"Mother, O mother!"—he call'd in the  
dark to me year after year—  
They beat me for that, they beat me—  
you know that I could n't but hear;  
And then at the last they found I had  
grown so stupid and still  
They let me abroad again—but the crea-  
tures had worked their will.

## XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of  
my bone was left—  
I stole them all from the lawyers—and  
you, will you call it a theft?—  
My baby, the bones that had suck'd me,  
the bones that had laughed and had  
cried—  
Theirs? O, no! they are mine—not  
theirs—they had moved in my side.

## XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones?  
I kiss'd 'em, I buried 'em all—  
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night  
by the churchyard wall.  
My Willy 'll rise up whole when the  
trumpet of judgment 'll sound,  
But I charge you never to say that I  
laid him in holy ground.

## XIII

They would scratch him up—they would  
hang him again on the cursed tree.  
Sin? O, yes, we are sinners, I know—let  
all that be,  
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's  
good will toward men—  
"Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord"  
—let me hear it again;  
"Full of compassion and mercy—long-  
suffering." Yes, O, yes!  
For the lawyer is born but to murder—  
the Saviour lives but to bless.  
*He* 'll never put on the black cap except  
for the worst of the worst,  
And the first may be last—I have heard  
it in church—and the last may be  
first.  
Suffering—O, long-suffering—yes, as the  
Lord must know,  
Year after year in the mist and the wind  
and the shower and the snow.

## XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told  
you he never repented his sin.  
How do they know it? are *they* his mother?  
are *you* of his kin?  
Heard! have you ever heard, when the  
storm on the downs began,  
The wind that 'll wail like a child and  
the sea that 'll moan like a man?

## xv

Election, Election, and Reprobation—it's all very well.  
But I go-to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in hell.  
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has look'd into my care,  
And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy, I know not where.

## xvi

And if he be lost—but to save my soul, that is all your desire—  
Do you think that I care for my soul if my boy be gone to the fire?  
I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me alone—  
You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

## xvii

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean to be kind,  
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice in the wind—  
The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call in the dark,  
And he calls to me now from the church and not from the gibbet—for hark!  
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—  
Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

*leftovers, going to* TO VIRGIL

[1882.]

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire, Ilion falling, Rome arising, wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre; Landscape-lover, lord of language more than he that sang the Works and Days, All the chosen coin of fancy flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland, tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;

All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word!

Poet of the happy Tityrus piping underneath his beechen bowers; Poet of the poet-satyr whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying in the blissful years again to be, Summers of the snakeless meadow, unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

Thou that seest Universal Nature moved by Universal Mind; Thou majestic in thy sadness at the doubtful doom of human kind; Light among the vanish'd ages; star that gildest yet this phantom shore; Golden branch amid the shadows, kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

Now thy Forum roars no longer, fallen every purple Cæsar's dome— Tho' thine ocean-roll of rhythm sound forever of Imperial Rome—

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd, and the Rome of freemen holds her place, I, from out the Northern Island sunder'd once from all the human race,

I salute thee, Mantovano, I that loved thee since my day began, Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded by the lips of man.

## 'FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE'

[1883.]

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!  
So they row'd, and there we landed—"O venusta Sirmio!"  
There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,  
There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,  
Came that "Ave atque Vale" of the poet's hopeless woe,  
Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hundred years ago,  
"Frater Ave atque Vale"—as we wander'd to and fro  
Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below  
Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

## THE ANCIENT SAGE

[1885.]

A THOUSAND summers ere the time of Christ  
From out his ancient city came a Seer Whom one that loved, and honour'd him, and yet  
Was no disciple, richly garb'd, but worn From wasteful living, follow'd—in his hand A scroll of verse—till that old man before A cavern whence an affluent fountain pour'd  
From darkness into daylight, turn'd and spoke.

This wealth of waters might but seem to draw  
 'From yon dark cave, but, son, the source is higher,  
 Yon summit half-a-league in air—and higher,  
 The cloud that hides it—higher still, the heavens  
 Whereby the cloud was moulded, and whereout  
 The cloud descended. Force is from the heights.  
 I am wearied of our city, son, and go  
 To spend my one last year among the hills.  
 What hast thou there? Some deathsong  
     for the Ghouls  
 To make their banquet relish? let me read.

"How far thro' all the bloom and brake  
     That nightingale is heard!  
 What power but the bird's could make  
     This music in the bird?  
 How summer-bright are yonder skies,  
     And earth as fair in hue!  
 And yet what sign of aught that lies  
     Behind the green and blue?  
 But man to-day is fancy's fool  
     As man hath ever been.  
 The nameless Power, or Powers, that rule  
     Were never heard or seen."

If thou wouldst hear the Nameless, and wilt dive  
 Into the Temple-cave of thine own self,  
 There, brooding by the central altar, thou  
 May'st haply learn the Nameless hath a voice,  
 By which thou wilt abide, if thou be wise,  
 As if thou knewest, tho' thou canst not know;  
 For Knowledge is the swallow on the lake  
 That sees and stirs the surface-shadow there  
 But never yet hath dipt into the abyss,  
 The Abyss of all Abysses, beneath, within  
 The blue of sky and sea, the green of earth,  
 And in the million-millionth of a grain  
 Which cleft and cleft again for evermore,  
 And ever vanishing, never vanishes,  
 To me, my son, more mystic than myself,  
 Or even than the Nameless is to me.  
 And when thou sendest thy free soul thro'  
     heaven,  
 Nor understandest bound nor boundlessness,  
 Thou seest the Nameless of the hundred names.  
 And if the Nameless should withdraw  
     from all  
 Thy frailty counts most real, all thy world  
 Might vanish like thy shadow in the dark.

"And since—from when this earth began—  
     The Nameless never came  
 Among us, never spake with man,  
     And never named the Name"—  
 Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
 Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
 Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,  
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,  
 Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one:  
 Thou canst not prove thou art immortal, no  
 Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,  
 Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,  
 Am not thyself in converse with thyself,  
 For nothing worthy proving can be proven,  
 Nor yet disproven: wherefore thou be wise,  
 Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
 And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith!  
 She reels not in the storm of warring words,  
 She brightens at the clash of 'Yes' and 'No,'  
 She sees the Best that glimmers thro' the Worst,  
 She feels the Sun is hid but for a night,  
 She spies the summer thro' the winter bud,  
 She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls,  
 She hears the lark within the songless egg,  
 She finds the fountain where they wail'd 'Mirage'!  
 "What Power? aught akin to Mind,  
     The mind in me and you?  
 Or power as of the Gods gone blind  
     Who see not what they do?"  
 But some in yonder city hold, my son,  
 That none but Gods could build this house of ours,  
 So beautiful, vast, various, so beyond  
 All work of man, yet, like all work of man,  
 A beauty with defect—till That which knows,  
 And is not known, but felt thro' what we feel  
 Within ourselves is highest, shall descend  
 On this half-deed, and shape it at the last  
 According to the Highest in the Highest.  
 "What Power but the Years that make  
     And break the vase of clay,  
 And stir the sleeping earth, and wake  
     The bloom that fades away?

"What rules but the Days and Hours  
That cancel weal with woe,  
And wind the front of youth with flowers,  
And cap our age with snow?"

The days and hours are ever glancing by,  
And seem to flicker past thro' sun and shade,  
Or short, or long, as Pleasure leads, or Pain;  
But with the Nameless is nor Day nor Hour;  
Tho' we, thin minds, who creep from thought to thought,  
Break into 'Thens' and 'Whens' the Eternal Now:  
This double seeming of the single world!—  
My words are like the babblings in a dream  
Of nightmare, when the babblings break the dream.  
But thou be wise in this dream-world of ours,  
Nor take thy dial for thy deity,  
But make the passing shadow serve thy will.

"The years that made the stripling wise  
Undo their work again,  
And leave him, blind of heart and eyes,  
The last and least of men;  
Who clings to earth, and once would dare  
Hell-heat or Arctic cold,  
And now one breath of cooler air  
Would loose him from his hold;  
His winter chills him to the root,  
He withers marrow and mind;  
The kernel of the shrivell'd fruit  
Is jutting thro' the rind;  
The tiger spasms tear his chest,  
The palsy wags his head;  
The wife, the sons, who love him best  
Would fain that he were dead;  
The griefs by which he once was wrung  
Were never worth the while"—

Who knows? or whether this earth-narrow life  
Be yet but yolk, and forming in the shell?

"The shaft of scorn that once had stung  
But wakes a dotard smile."

The placid gleam of sunset after storm!

"The statesman's brain that sway'd the past  
Is feebler than his knees;  
The passive sailor wrecks at last  
In ever-silent seas;  
The warrior hath forgot his arms,  
The Learned all his lore;  
The changing market frets or charms  
The merchant's hope no more;

The prophet's beacon burn'd in vain,  
And now is lost in cloud;  
The plowman passes, bent with pain,  
To mix with what he plow'd;  
The poet whom his Age would quote  
As heir of endless fame—  
He knows not ev'n the book he wrote.  
Not even his own name.  
For man has overlived his day,  
And, darkening in the light,  
Scarce feels the senses break away  
To mix with ancient Night."

The shell must break before the bird can fly.

"The years that when my Youth began  
Had set the lily and rose  
By all my ways where'er they ran,  
Have ended mortal foes;  
My rose of love for ever gone,  
My lily of truth and trust—  
They made her lily and rose in one,  
And changed her into dust.  
O rosetree planted in my grief,  
And growing, on her tomb,  
Her dust is greening in your leaf,  
Her blood is in your bloom.  
O slender lily waving there,  
And laughing back the light,  
In vain you tell me 'Earth is fair'  
When all is dark as night."

My son, the world is dark with griefs and graves,  
So dark that men cry out against the Heavens.  
Who knows but that the darkness is in man?  
The doors of Night may be the gates of Light;  
For wert thou born or blind or deaf, and then  
Suddenly heal'd, how wouldst thou glory in all  
The splendours and the voices of the world!  
And we, the poor earth's dying race, and yet  
No phantoms, watching from a phantom shore  
Await the last and largest sense to make  
The phantom walls of this illusion fade.  
And show us that the world is wholly fair.

"But vain the tears for darken'd years  
As laughter over wine,  
And vain the laughter as the tears,  
O brother, mine or thine,

"For all that laugh, and all that weep,  
And all that breathe are one  
Slight ripple on the boundless deep  
That moves, and all is gone."

But that one ripple on the boundless deep  
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself  
For ever changing form, but evermore  
One with the boundless motion of the  
deep.

"Yet wine and laughter friends! and set  
The lamps alight, and call  
For golden music, and forget  
The darkness of the pall."

If utter darkness closed the day, my  
son —  
But earth's dark forehead flings athwart the  
heavens  
Her shadow crown'd with stars — and  
yonder — out  
To northward — some that never set, but  
pass  
From sight and night to lose themselves  
in day.  
I hate the black negation of the bier,  
And wish the dead, as happier than our-  
selves  
And higher, having climb'd one step beyond  
Our village miseries, might be borne in  
white  
To burial or to burning, hymn'd from hence  
With songs in praise of death, and crown'd  
with flowers!

"O worms and maggots of to-day  
Without their hope of wings!"

But louder than thy rhyme the silent Word  
Of that world-prophet in the heart of  
man.

"Tho' some have gleams or so they say  
Of more than mortal things."

To-day? but what of yesterday? for oft  
On me, when boy, there came what then I  
call'd,

Who knew no books and no philosophies,  
In my boy-phrase 'The Passion of the  
Past.'

The first gray streak of earliest summer-  
dawn,

The last long stripe of waning crimson  
gloom,

As if the late and early were but one —  
A height, a broken grange, a grove, a  
flower

Had murmurs 'Lost and gone and lost and  
gone!'

A breath, a whisper — some divine fare-  
well —

Desolate sweetness — far and far away —  
What had he loved, what had he lost, the  
boy?

I know not and I speak of what has been.  
And more, my son! for more than once  
when I

Sat all alone, revolving in myself  
The word that is the symbol of myself,

The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,  
And past into the Nameless, as a cloud  
Melts into Heaven. I touch'd my limbs,  
the limbs  
Were strange not mine — and yet no shade  
of doubt,  
But utter clearness, and thro' loss of Self  
The gain of such large life as match'd  
with ours  
Were Sun to spark — unshadowable in  
words,  
Themselves but shadows of a shadow-  
world.

"And idle gleams will come and go,  
But still the clouds remain;"

The clouds themselves are children of the  
Sun.

"And Night and Shadow rule below  
When only Day should reign."

And Day and Night are children of the  
Sun,  
And idle gleams to thee are light to me.  
Some say, the Light was father of the  
Night,  
And some, the Night was father of the  
Light,  
No night no day! — I touch thy world  
again —  
No ill no good! such counter-terms, my  
son,  
Are border-races, holding, each its own  
By endless war: but night enough is there  
In yon dark city: get thee back: and  
since  
The key to that weird casket, which for  
thee  
But holds a skull, is neither thine nor  
mine,  
But in the hand of what is more than  
man,  
Or in man's hand when man is more than  
man,  
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,  
And make thy gold thy vassal not thy king,  
And fling free alms into the beggar's  
bowl,  
And send the day into the darken'd heart;  
Nor list for guerdon in the voice of men,  
A dying echo from a falling wall;  
Nor care — for Hunger hath the Evil eye —  
To vex the noon with fiery gems, or fold  
Thy presence in the silk of sumptuous  
looms;  
Nor roll thy viands on a luscious tongue,  
Nor drown thyself with flies in honied  
wine;  
Nor thou be rageful, like a handled bee,  
And lose thy life by usage of thy sting;  
Nor harm an adder thro' the lust for  
harm,

Nor make a snail's horn shrink for wantonness;  
And more — think well! Do-well will follow thought.  
And in the fatal sequence of this world  
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood;  
But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire.  
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness  
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself.  
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,  
And climb the Mount of Blessing, whence,  
if thou  
Look higher, then — perchance — thou mayest — beyond  
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines.  
And past the range of Night and Shadow —  
see  
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day  
Strike on the Mount of Vision!  
So, farewell.

## VASTNESS

[1889.]

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after many a vanish'd face.  
Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust of a vanish'd race.  
Raving politics, never at rest — as this poor earth's pale history runs. —  
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns?  
Lies upon this side, lies upon that side, truthless violence mourn'd by the wise.  
Thousands of voices drowning his own in a popular torrent of lies upon lies:  
Stately purposes, valour in battle, glorious annals of army and fleet.  
Death for the right cause, death for the wrong cause, trumpets of victory,  
groans of defeat;  
Innocence seethed in her mother's milk, and Charity setting the martyr afame;  
Thraldom who walks with the banner of Freedom, and recks not to ruin a realm in her name.  
Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the gloom of doubts that darken the schools;  
Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand, follow'd up by her vassal legion of fools;  
Trade flying over a thousand seas with her spice and her vintage, her silk and her corn:  
Desolate eftling, sailorless harbours, famishing populace, wharves forlorn:

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise; gloom of the evening, Life at a close;  
Pleasure who flaunts on her wide down-way with her flying robe and her poison'd rose;

Pain, that has crawl'd from the corpse of Pleasure, a worm which writhes all day, and at night

Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper, and stings him back to the curse of the light:

Wealth with his wines and his wedded harlots; honest Poverty, bare to the bone;  
Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty; Flat-tery gilding the rift in a throne;

Fame blowing out from her golden trumpet a jubilant challenge to Time and to Fate;

Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on all the laurel'd graves of the Great;

Love for the maiden, crown'd with marriage, no regrets for aught that has been,

Household happiness, gracious children, debtless competence, golden mean;

National hatreds of whole generations, and pigmy spites of the village spire;

Vows that will last to the last death-ruckie, and vows that are snapt in a moment of fire;

He that has lived for the lust of the minute, and died in the doing it, flesh without mind;

He that has nail'd all the flesh to the Cross, till Self died out in the love of his kind;

Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, and all these old revolutions of earth;

All new-old revolutions of Empire — change of the tide — what is all of it worth?

What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, varying voices of prayer, All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy with all that is fair?

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own corpse-coffins at last? Swallow'd in Vastness, lost in Silence, drown'd in the deeps of a meaningless Past?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a moment's anger of bees in their hive? —

Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever: the dead are not dead but alive.

## MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

[1859.]

I

O YOUNG Mariner.  
 You from the haven  
 Under the sea-cliff,  
 You that are watching  
 The gray Magician  
 With eyes of wonder,  
*I am Merlin,*  
 And *I am dying,*  
*I am Merlin*  
 Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard  
 Who found me at sunrise  
 Sleeping and woke me  
 And learn'd me Magic!  
 Great the Master,  
 And sweet the Magic,  
 When over the valley,  
 In early summers,  
 Over the mountain,  
 On human faces,  
 And all around me,  
 Moving to melody,  
 Floated The Gleam.

III

Once at the croak of a Raven who  
 crossed it,  
 A barbarous people,  
 Blind to the magic,  
 And deaf to the melody,  
 Snarl'd at and cursed me.  
 A demon vexed me,  
 The light retreated,  
 The landskip darken'd,  
 The melody deaden'd,  
 The Master whisper'd,  
 'Follow The Gleam.'

IV

Then to the melody,  
 Over a wilderness  
 Gliding, and glancing at  
 Elf of the woodland,  
 Gnome of the cavern,  
 Griffin and Giant,  
 And dancing of Fairies  
 In desolate hollows,  
 And wraiths of the mountain,  
 And rolling of dragons  
 By warble of water,  
 Or cataract music  
 Of falling torrents,  
 Flitted The Gleam.

V

Down from the mountain  
 And over the level,  
 And streaming and shining on  
 Silent river.

*at least in  
32.*

Silvery willow,  
 Pasture and plowland,  
 Innocent maidens,  
 Garrulous children,  
 Homestead and harvest,  
 Reaper and gleaner,  
 And rough-ruddy faces  
 Of lowly labor,  
 Slided The Gleam —

VI

Then, with a melody  
 Stronger and statelier,  
 Led me at length  
 To the city and palace  
 Of Arthur the king;  
 Touch'd at the golden  
 Cross of the churches,  
 Flash'd on the Tournament,  
 Flicker'd and bicker'd  
 From helmet to helmet,  
 And last on the forehead  
 Of Arthur the blameless  
 Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness  
 Closed upon Camelot;  
 Arthur had vanish'd  
 I knew not whither,  
 The king who loved me,  
 And cannot die;  
 For out of the darkness  
 Silent and slowly  
 The Gleam that had waned to a win-  
 try glimmer  
 On icy fallow  
 And faded forest,  
 Drew to the valley  
 Named of the shadow,  
 And slowly brightening  
 Out of the glimmer,  
 And slowly moving again to a  
 melody  
 Yearningly tender,  
 Fell on the shadow,  
 No longer a shadow,  
 But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII

And broader and brighter  
 The Gleam flying onward,  
 Wed to the melody,  
 Sang thro' the world;  
 And slower and fainter,  
 Old and weary,  
 But eager to follow,  
 I saw, whenever  
 In passing it glanced upon  
 Hamlet or city,  
 That under the Crosses  
 The dead man's garden,  
 The mortal hillock,  
 Would break into blossom;

And so to the land's  
Last limit I came —  
And can no longer,  
But die rejoicing,  
For thro' the Magic  
Of Him the Mighty,  
Who taught me in childhood,  
There on the border  
Of boundless Ocean,  
And all but in Heaven  
Hovers The Gleam.

## IX

Not of the sunlight,  
Not of the moonlight,  
Not of the starlight!  
O young Mariner,  
Down to the haven,  
Call your companions,  
Launch your vessel  
And crowd your canvas,  
And, ere it vanishes  
Over the margin,  
After it, follow it,  
Follow The Gleam.

## FAR — FAR — AWAY

(FOR MUSIC)

[1889.]

WHAT sight so lured him thro' the fields  
he knew  
As where earth's green stole into heaven's  
own hue,  
Far — far — away?

What sound was dearest in his native dells?  
The mellow lin-lan-lone of evening bells  
Far — far — away.

What vague world-whisper, mystic pain  
or joy,  
Thro' those three words would haunt him  
when a boy,  
Far — far — away?

A whisper from his dawn of life? a breath  
From some fair dawn beyond the doors of  
death  
Far — far — away?

Far, far, how far? from o'er the gates of  
birth,  
The faint horizons, all the bounds of earth,  
Far — far — away?

What charm in the words, a charm no  
words could give?  
O dying words, can Music make you live  
Far — far — away?

## THE OAK

[1889.]

LIVE thy Life,  
Young and old,  
Like yon oak,  
Bright in spring,  
Living gold;

Summer-rich  
Then; and then  
Autumn-changed,  
Soberer-hued  
Gold again.

All his leaves  
Fallen at length,  
Look, he stands,  
Trunk and bough,  
Naked strength.

## CROSSING THE BAR

[1889.]

SUNSET and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
When I put out to sea.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the bound-  
less deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and  
Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.

# ROBERT BROWNING

(1812-1889)

## SONG FROM PARACELSIUS

[1835.]

OVER the sea our galleys went,  
With cleaving prows in order brave  
To a speeding wind and a bounding wave,

A gallant armament:

Each bark built out of a forest-tree

Left leafy and rough as first it grew,  
And nailed all over the gaping sides,  
Within and without, with black bull-hides,  
Seethed in fat and suppled in flame:  
To bear the playful billows' game:  
So, each good ship was rude to see,  
Rude and bare to the outward view,

But each upbore a stately tent  
Where cedar pales in scented row  
Kept out the flakes of the dancing brine,  
And an awning drooped the mast below,  
In fold on fold of the purple fine,  
That neither noontide nor starshine  
Nor moonlight cold which maketh mad,

Might pierce the regal tenement.  
When the sun dawn'd, oh, gay and glad  
We set the sail and plied the oar;  
But when the night-wind blew like breath,  
For joy of one day's voyage more,  
We sang together on the wide sea,  
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore;

Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,  
Each helm made sure by the twilight star,  
And in a sleep as calm as death,  
We, the voyagers from afar,

Lay stretched along, each weary crew

In a circle round its wondrous tent

Whence gleamed soft light and curled rich

scent.

And with light and perfume, music too:  
So the stars wheeled round, and the dark-

ness past,

And at morn we started beside the mast,

And still each ship was sailing fast.

Now, one morn, land appeared — a speck  
Dim trembling betwixt sea and sky:

"Avoid it," cried our pilot, "check

The shout, restrain the eager eye!"

But the heaving sea was black behind

For many a night and many a day,

And land, though but a rock, drew nigh;

So, we broke the cedar pales away,

Let the purple awning flap in the wind,

And a statue bright was on every deck!

We shouted, every man of us,

And steered right into the harbor thus,

With pomp and paean glorious.

A hundred shapes of lucid stone!

All day we built its shrine for each,  
A shrine of rock for every one,  
Nor paused till in the westering sun

We sat together on the beach  
To sing because our task was done.  
When lo! what shouts and merry songs!  
What laughter all the distance stirs!  
A loaded raft with happy throngs  
Of gentle islanders!

"Our isles are just at hand," they cried,  
"Like cloudlets faint in even sleeping;  
Our temple-gates are opened wide,

Our olive-groves thick shade are keeping  
For these majestic forms" — they cried.  
Oh, then we awoke with sudden start  
From our deep dream, and knew, too late,  
How bare the rock, how desolate,  
Which had received our precious freight:

Yet we called out — "Depart!  
Our gifts, once given, must here abide.  
Our work is done; we have no heart  
To mar our work," — we cried.

## CAVALIER TUNES\*

[1842.]

### I. MARCHING ALONG

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest  
folk droop,

Marched them along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such  
carles  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!

Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pastry, nor bite take nor sup  
Till you're —

(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score  
strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-  
ing this song.

\* The poems taken from the *Dramatic Lyrics*, *Dramatic Romances*, and *Men and Women*, follow Browning's final arrangement, which represents a redistribution subsequent to their original publication. This accounts for the irregularities in chronology.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell  
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry  
as well!

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!  
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(Chorus) *Marching along, fifty-score  
strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-  
ing this song?*

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and  
his snarls  
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent  
carles!

Hold by the right, you double your might;  
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the  
fight,

(Chorus) *March we along, fifty-score  
strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, sing-  
ing this song!*

## II. GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who'll do him right  
now?

King Charles, and who's ripe for fight  
now?

Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,  
King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?  
Who raised me the house that sank once?  
Who helped me to gold I spent since?  
Who found me in wine you drank once?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do  
him right now?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe  
for fight now?*

*Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's  
despite now,  
King Charles!*

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
By the old fool's side that begot him?  
For whom did he cheer and laugh e'se,  
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

(Chorus) *King Charles, and who'll do  
him right now?*

*King Charles, and who's ripe  
for fight now?*

*Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's  
despite now,  
King Charles!*

## III. BOOT AND SADDLE

### I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day  
Brightens to blue from its silvery grey,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and  
away!*

II  
Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;  
Many's the friend there, will listen and  
pray  
'God's luck to gallants that strike up the  
lay—

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and  
away!*

### III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads'  
array.

Who laughs, 'Good fellows ere this, by my  
fay,

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and  
away?*

### IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and  
gay,  
Laughs when you talk of surrendering,  
'Nay!

I've better counsellors; what counsel they?

(Chorus) *Boot, saddle, to horse, and  
away!*

## THE LOST LEADER

[1845.]

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft  
us,

Lost all the others she lets us devote;  
They, with the gold to give, doled him  
out silver,

So much was theirs who so little allowed:  
How all our copper had gone for his  
service!

Rags—were they purple, his heart had  
been proud!

We that had loved him so, followed him,  
honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,  
Learned his great language, caught his clear  
accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they  
watch from their graves!

He alone breaks from the van and the  
freemen,

He alone sinks to the rear and the  
slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his  
presence;

Songs may inspirit us,—not from his  
lyre;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his  
quiescence,

Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade  
aspire:

Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
 One task more declined, one more foot-path untrod,  
 One more triumph for devils and sorrow for angels,  
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!  
 Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!  
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
 Never glad confident morning again!  
 Best fight on well, for we taught him,—strike gallantly,  
 Menace our heart ere we master his own;  
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
 Pardon'd in Heaven, the first by the throne!

'HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX'

[16—]

[1845.]

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he; I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
 'Good speed!' cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;  
 'Speed!' echoed the wall to us galloping through;  
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.  
 Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;  
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained 'slackner' the bit,  
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.  
 'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawnded clear;  
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;  
 At Düsseldorf, 'twas morning as plain as could be;  
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,  
 So Joris broke silence with, 'Yet there is time!'

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
 And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
 To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,  
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back  
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;  
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!  
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which ay and anon  
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, 'Stay spur!  
 Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,  
 We'll remember at Aix'—for one heard the quick wheeze  
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
 As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I, Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;  
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;  
 Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
 And 'Gallop,' gasped Joris, 'for Aix is in sight!'

'How they'll greet us!'—and all in a moment his roan Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;  
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
 Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

*Two horses gallop out of the last, Roland, die in searching*

*Asic.*

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster  
let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt  
and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his  
ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse  
without peer;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any  
noise, bad or good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped  
and stood.  
And all I remember is, friends flocking  
round  
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on  
the ground;  
And no voice but was praising this Roland  
of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last meas-  
ure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common  
consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought  
good news from Ghent.

#### THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD- EL-KADR

[1842.]

As I ride, as I ride,  
With a full heart for my guide,  
So its tide rocks my side,  
As I ride, as I ride,  
That, as I were double-eyed,  
He, in whom our Tribes confide,  
Is desried, ways untried  
As I ride, as I ride.  
As I ride, as I ride  
To our Chief and his Allied,  
Who dares chide my heart's pride  
As I ride, as I ride?  
Or are witnesses denied—  
Through the desert waste and wide  
Do I glide unespied  
As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,  
When an inner voice has cried,  
The sands slide, nor abide  
(As I ride, as I ride)  
O'er each visioned homicide  
That came vaunting (has he lied?)  
To reside—where he died,  
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,  
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,  
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,  
As I ride, as I ride,  
Shows where sweat has sprung and  
dried,  
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—  
How has vied stride with stride  
As I ride, as I ride!

As I ride, as I ride,  
Could I loose what Fate has tied,  
Ere I pried, she should hide  
(As I ride, as I ride)  
All that's meant me—satisfied  
When the Prophet and the Bride  
Stop veins I'd have subside  
As I ride, as I ride!

#### SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

[Published in *Hood's Magazine*, 1844.—Reprinted  
1845.]

PLAQUE take all your pedants, say I!  
He who wrote what I hold in my hand,  
Centuries back was so good as to die,  
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;  
This, that was a book in its time,  
Printed on paper and bound in leather,  
Last month in the white of a matin-prime  
Just when the birds sang all together,  
Into the garden I brought it to read,  
And under the arbute and laurustine  
Read it, so help me grace in my need,  
From title-page to closing line.  
Chapter on chapter did I count,  
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;  
Added up the mortal amount;  
And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree with a crevice  
An owl would build in, were he but sage;  
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis  
In a castle of the Middle Age,  
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;  
When he'd be private, there might he  
spend  
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:  
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.  
Splash, went he, as under he ducked,  
—I knew at the bottom rain-drippings  
stagnate;  
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked  
To bury him with, my bookshelf's mag-  
nate;  
Then I went indoors, brought out a loaf,  
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;  
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf  
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss  
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,  
A spider had spun his web across,  
And sat in the midst with arms akimbo:  
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,  
And, *de profundis, accentibus laetis,*  
*Cantate!* quoth I, as I got a rake,  
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it; dry in the sun,  
With all the binding all of a blister,  
And great blue spots where the ink has  
run,  
And reddish streaks that wink and glister

Sent by Religious Society.

O'er the page so beautifully yellow:  
Oh, well have the droppings played their  
tricks!  
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this  
fellow?  
Here's one stuck in his chapter six!

How did he like it when the live creatures  
Tickled and toused and browsed him all  
over,  
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,  
Came in, each one, for his right of  
trover?  
When the water beetle with great blind  
deaf face  
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,  
And the newt borrowed just so much of  
the preface  
As tiled in the top of his black wife's  
closet?

All that life and fun and romping,  
All that frisking and twisting and coup-  
ling,  
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were  
swamping  
And clasps were cracking and covers  
suppling!  
As if you had carried sour John Knox  
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna or  
Munich,  
Fastened him into a front-row box,  
And danced off the ballet with trousers  
and tunic.

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough  
is it?  
Back to my room shall you take your  
sweet self!  
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, suf-  
ficit!  
See the snug niche I have made on my  
shelf.  
A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall cover  
you,  
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be  
gay,  
And with E. on each side, and F. right  
over you,  
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

#### SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER

[1842.]

GR-R-R — there go, my heart's abhorrence!  
Water your damned flower-pots, do!  
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,  
God's blood, would not mine kill you!  
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?  
Oh, that rose has prior claims—  
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?  
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:  
*Salve tibi!* I must hear  
Wise talk of the kind of weather,  
Sort of season, time of year:  
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely  
*Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt;*  
*What's the Latin name for 'parsley'?*  
*What's the Greek name for Swine's*  
*Snout?*

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,  
Laid with care on our own shelf!  
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,  
And a goblet for ourself,  
Rinsed like something sacrificial  
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps —  
Marked with L. for our initial!  
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores  
Squats outside the Convent bank,  
With Sanchicha, telling stories,  
Steeping tresses in the tank,  
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,  
— Can't I see his dead eye glow,  
Bright as 'twere a Barbary's corsair's?  
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,  
Knife and fork he never lays  
Cross-wise, to my recollection,  
As I do, in Jesu's praise.  
I, the Trinity illustrate,  
Drinking watered orange-pulp —  
In three sips the Arian frustrate;  
While he drains his at one gulp!

Oh, those melons! If he 's able  
We're to have a feast; so nice!  
One goes to the Abbot's table,  
All of us get each a slice.  
How go on your flowers? None double?  
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?  
Strange! — And I, too, at such trouble,  
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,  
Once you trip on it, entails  
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,  
One sure, if another fails:  
If I trip him just a-dying,  
Sure of Heaven as sure as can be,  
Spin him round and send him flying  
Off to Hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel  
On grey paper with blunt type!  
Simply glance at it, you grovel  
Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:  
If I double down its pages  
At the woeful sixteenth print,  
When he gathers his greengages,  
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan! — one might venture  
 Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave  
 Such a flaw in the indenture  
 As he'd miss till past retrieve,  
 Blasted lay that rose-acacia  
 We're so proud of! *H<sub>3</sub>, Z<sub>3</sub>, Hine . . .*  
*'St, there's Vespers! Plena gratia*  
*Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r — you swine!*

## THE LABORATORY

[ANCIEN REGIME]

[Published in *Hood's Magazine*, 1841. — Reprinted 1842.]

Now THAT I, tying thy glass mask tightly,  
 May gaze thro' these faint smokes curling  
 whitely;  
 As thou pliest thy trade in this devil's-  
 smithy —

Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?

He is with her; and they know that I know  
 Where they are, what they do: they believe  
 my tears flow  
 While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled  
 to the drear  
 Empty church, to pray God in, for them! —  
 I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,  
 Pound at thy powder, — I am not in haste!  
 Better sit thus, and observe thy strange  
 things,  
 Than go where men wait me and dance at  
 the King's.

That in the mortar — you call it a gum?  
 Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings  
 come!  
 And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,  
 Sure to taste sweetly, — is that poison too?

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treas-  
 ures,  
 What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!  
 To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,  
 A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree-basket!

Soon, at the King's, a mere lozenge to give  
 And Pauline should have just thirty min-  
 utes to live!  
 But to light a pastille, and Elise, with her  
 head  
 And her breast and her arms and her  
 hands, should drop dead!

Quick — is it finished? The colour's too  
 grim!  
 Why not soft like the phial's, enticing and  
 dim?  
 Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it  
 and stir,  
 And try it and taste, ere she fix and  
 prefer!

What a drop! She's not little, no minion  
 like me —  
 That's why she ensnared him: this never  
 will free  
 The soul from those masculine eyes, —  
 say, 'no'!  
 To that pulse's magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I  
 brought  
 My own eyes to bear on her so, that I  
 thought  
 Could I keep them one half minute fixed,  
 she would fall,  
 Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it  
 all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!  
 Let death be felt and the proof remain;  
 Brand, burn up, bite into its grace —  
 He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be  
 not morose;  
 It kills her, and this prevents seeing it  
 close:  
 The delicate droplet, my whole fortune's  
 fee —  
 If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?  
 Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to  
 your fill,  
 You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth  
 if you will!  
 But brush this dust off me, lest horror it  
 brings  
 Ere I know it — next moment I dance at  
 the King's!

## CRISTINA

[1842.]

SHE should never have looked at me  
 If she meant I should not love her!  
 There are plenty . . . men, you call such,  
 I suppose . . . she may discover  
 All her soul to, if she pleases,  
 And yet leave much as she found them:  
 But I'm not so, and she knew it  
 When she fixed me, glancing round them

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?  
 But I can't tell (there's my weakness)  
 What her look said! — no vile cant, sure,  
 About 'need to strew the bleakness  
 Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,  
 That the sea feels' — no 'strange yearn-  
 ing'

That such souls have, most to lavish  
 Where there's chance of least returning.'

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!  
 But not quite so sunk that moments,  
 Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,  
 When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,  
And appraise it if pursuing  
Or the right way or the wrong way,  
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,  
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,  
Whereby piled-up honours perish,  
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,  
While just this or that poor impulse  
Which for once had play unstifled  
Seems the sole work of a lifetime  
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,  
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,  
Ages past the soul existed,  
Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
And hence fleets again for ages,  
While the true end, sole and single,  
It stops here for is, this love-way,  
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for  
And eternally must lose it;  
Better ends may be in prospect,  
Deeper blisses (if you choose it)  
But this life's end and this love-bliss  
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether  
This she felt as, looking at me,  
Mine and her souls rushed together.

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,  
The world's honours, in derision,  
Trampled out the light for ever:  
Never fear but there's provision  
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge  
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!  
— Making those who catch God's secret  
Just so much more prize their capture.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!  
She has lost me, I have gained her;  
Her soul's mine: and thus, grown perfect,  
I shall pass my life's remainder.  
Life will just hold out the proving  
Both our powers, alone and blended;  
And then, come the next life quickly!  
This world's use will have been ended.

## THE LOST MISTRESS

[1845.]

ALL's over, then: does truth sound bitter  
As one at first believes?  
Hark, 'tis the sparrow's good-night twitter  
About your cottage eaves!

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,  
I noticed that, to-day;  
One day more bursts them open fully  
— You know the red turns grey.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?

May I take your hand in mine?

Mere friends are we,— well, friends the  
merest

Keep much that I resign:

For each glance of that eye so bright and  
black,

Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—  
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops  
back,

Though it stay in my soul for ever! —

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,  
Or only a thought stronger;  
I will hold your hand but as long as all  
may,  
Or so very little longer!

## EARTH'S IMMORTALITIES

[1845.]

## FAME

SEE, as the prettiest graves will do in time,  
Our poet's wants the freshness of its  
prime;  
Spite of the sexton's browsing horse, the  
sods  
Have struggled through its binding osier-  
rods;  
Headstone and half-sunk footstone lean  
awry,  
Wanting the brick-work promised by and  
by;  
How the minute grey lichens, plate o'er  
plate,  
Have softened down the crisp-cut name  
and date!

## LOVE

So, the year's done with!  
(Love me for ever!)  
All March begun with,  
April's endeavour;  
May-wreaths that bound me  
June needs must sever;  
Now snows fall round me,  
Quenching June's fever—  
(Love me for ever!)

## MEETING AT NIGHT

[1845.]

THE grey sea and the long black land;  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
 Three fields to cross till a farm appears;  
 A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
 And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
 And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and  
 fears,  
 Than the two hearts beating each to each!

## PARTING AT MORNING

[1845.]

ROUND the cape of a sudden came the sea,  
 And the sun looked over the mountain's  
 rim:  
 And straight was a path of gold for him,  
 And the need of a world of men for me.

## SONG

[1845.]

NAY but you, who do not love her,  
 Is she not pure gold, my mistress?  
 Holds earth aught—speak truth—above  
 her?  
 Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,  
 And this last fairest tress of all,  
 So fair, see, ere I let it fall?  
 Because, you spend your lives in praising;  
 To praise, you search the wide world  
 over:  
 So, why not witness, calmly gazing,  
 If earth holds aught—speak truth—  
 above her?  
 Above this tress, and this I touch  
 But cannot praise, I love so much!

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

[1855.]

LET's contend no more, Love,  
 Strive nor weep;  
 All be as before, Love,  
 —Only sleep!  
 What so wild as words are?  
 I and thou  
 In debate, as birds are,  
 Hawk on bough!  
 See the creature stalking  
 While we speak!  
 Hush and hide the talking,  
 Cheek on cheek!

What so false as truth is,  
 False to thee?  
 Where the serpent's tooth is,  
 Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens  
 Never pry—  
 Lest we lose our Edens,  
 Eve and I!

Be a god and hold me  
 With a charm!  
 Be a man and fold me  
 With thine arm!  
 Teach me, only teach, Love!  
 As I ought  
 I will speak thy speech, Love,  
 Think thy thought—  
 Meet, if thou require it,  
 Both demands,  
 Laying flesh and spirit  
 In thy hands.  
 That shall be to-morrow,  
 Not to-night:  
 I must bury sorrow  
 Out of sight:  
 —Must a little weep, Love,  
 (Foolish me!)  
 And so fall asleep, Love,  
 Loved by thee.

## EVELYN HOPE

[1855.]

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!  
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed;  
 She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,  
 Beginning to die too, in the glass;  
 Little has yet been changed, I think:  
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
 Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.  
 Sixteen years old when she died!  
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;  
 It was not her time to love; beside,  
 Her life had many a hope and aim,  
 Duties enough and little cares,  
 And now was quiet, now astir,  
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—  
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?  
 What, your soul was pure and true,  
 The good stars met in your horoscope,  
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew—  
 And, just because I was thrice as old  
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,  
 Each was nought to each, must I be told?  
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

No, indeed! for God above  
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
 And creates the love to reward the love:  
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake!  
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:  
 Much is to learn and much to forget  
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,  
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall  
say,  
In the lower earth, in the years long still,  
That body and soul so pure and gay?  
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,  
And your mouth of your own geranium's  
red—  
And what you would do with me, in fine,  
In the new life come in the old one's  
stead.

have lived, I shall say, so much since  
then,  
Given up myself so many times,  
gained me the gains of various men,  
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;  
Let one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,  
Either I missed or itself missed me:  
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!  
What is the issue? let us see!

loved you, Evelyn, all the while!  
My heart seemed full as it could hold—  
here was place and to spare for the  
frank young smile  
And the red young mouth and the hair's  
young gold.  
o, hush,—I will give you this leaf to  
keep—  
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.  
here, that is our secret! go to sleep;  
You will wake, and remember, and un-  
derstand.

## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

[1855.]

WHERE the quiet-coloured end of evening  
smiles,  
Miles and miles  
in the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half-asleep  
inkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray  
or stop  
As they crop—  
was the site once of a city great and gay,  
(So they say)  
f our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
ield his court in, gathered councils, wield-  
ing far  
Peace or war.

ow—the country does not even boast a  
tree,  
As you see,  
o distinguish slopes of verdure, certain  
rills  
From the hills  
ntersect and give a name to, (else they run  
Into one)  
Where the domed and daring palace shot  
its spires  
Up like fires

O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
Bounding all,  
Made of marble, men might march on nor  
be prest,  
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of  
grass  
Never was!

Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-  
spreads  
And embeds

Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
Stock or stone—

Where a multitude of men breathed joy and  
woe

Long ago;  
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up,  
dread of shame  
Struck them tame;

And that glory and that shame alike, the  
gold

Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
On the plains,  
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
Overscored,

While the patching houseleek's head of  
blossom winks

Through the chinks—  
Marks the basement whence a tower in  
ancient time

Sprang sublime,  
And a burning ring, all round, the chariots  
traced

As they raced,  
And the monarch and his minions and his  
dames  
Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured  
eve

Smiles to leave  
To their folding, all our many-tinkling  
fleece

In such peace,  
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished  
grey

Melt away—  
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow  
hair

Waits me there  
In the turret whence the charioteers caught  
soul

For the goal,  
When the king looked, where she looks  
now, breathless, dumb  
Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples,  
all the glades'  
Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,

All the men!

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,

Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace

Of my face,

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech

Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth

South and North,

And they built their gods a brazen pillar high

As the sky,

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—

Gold, of course.

Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!

Earth's returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!

Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.

Love is best!

### UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

[AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY]

[1855.]

#### I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,  
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;  
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!

#### II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!  
There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;  
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a beast.

#### III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull  
Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,  
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!  
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned wool.

#### IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses! Why?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to take the eye!  
Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who hurries by;

Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun gets high;  
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted properly.

#### V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by rights,

'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off the heights:

You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen steam and wheeze, And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey olive-trees.

#### VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at once;

In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.

'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three fingers well,

The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red bell

Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick and sell.

#### VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout and splash!

In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-bows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle and pash

Round the lady atop in the conch—fifty gazers do not abash,

Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist in a sort of sash!

#### VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though you linger,

Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and mingle, Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous firs on the hill.

Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the fever and chill.

## IX

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells begin:  
 No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in:  
 You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.  
 By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets blood, draws teeth;  
 Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.  
 At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play, piping hot!  
 And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves were shot.  
 Above it, behold the archbishop's most fath-  
 erly of rebukes,  
 And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new law of the Duke's!  
 Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don So-and-so  
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarcha, Saint Jerome, and Cicero,  
 And moreover, (the sonnet goes rhyming,) 'the skirts of Saint Paul has reached,  
 Having preached us those six Lent lec-  
 tures more unctuous than ever he preached.'  
 Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession! our Lady borne smiling and smart  
 With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven words stuck in her heart!  
*Bang, whang, whang* goes the drum, *tootle-tootle* the fife;  
 No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleasure in life.

## X

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear! fowls, wine, at double the rate.  
 They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays passing the gate  
 It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the city!  
 Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still —ah, the pity, the pity!  
 Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,  
 And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles:  
 One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,  
 And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:  
*Bang, whang, whang* goes the drum, *tootle-tootle* the fife;  
 Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

[1855.]

OH, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!  
 I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;  
 But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind!

Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.  
 What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings,  
 Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings?

Aye, because the sea's the street there; and 'tis arched by . . . what you call . . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept the carnival:  
 I was never out of England — it's as if I saw it all!

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was warm in May?  
 Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day  
 When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red, —  
 On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on its bed,  
 O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might base his head?

Well, (and it was graceful of them) they'd break talk off and afford — She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he, to finger on his sword,  
 While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavichord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths diminished, sigh on sigh, Told them something? Those suspensions, those solutions — 'Must we die?' Those commiserating sevenths — 'Life might last! we can but try!'

'Were you happy?' — 'Yes.' — 'And are you still as happy?' — 'Yes. And you?' — 'Then, more kisses!' — 'Did I stop them, when a million seemed so few?' Hark! the dominant's persistence, till it must be answered to!

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!  
 'Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!  
 I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master play.'

Then they left you for their pleasure: till  
in due time, one by one,  
Some with lives that came to nothing, some  
with deeds as well undone,  
Death came tacitly and took them where  
they never see the sun.

But when I sit down to reason, think to  
take my stand nor swerve,  
While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from  
nature's close reserve,  
In you come with your cold music, till I  
creep thro' every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking  
where a house was burned —  
'Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Ven-  
ice spent what Venice earned!  
The soul, doubtless, is immortal — where a  
soul can be discerned.

'Yours for instance, you know physics,  
something of geology,  
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall  
rise in their degree;  
Butterflies may dread extinction, — you'll  
not die, it cannot be!

As for Venice and its people, merely born  
to bloom and drop,  
Here on earth they bore their fruitage,  
mirth and folly were the crop:  
What of soul was left, I wonder, when  
the kissing had to stop?

'Dust and ashes!' So you creak it, and I  
want the heart to scold.  
Dear dead women, with such hair, too —  
what's become of all the gold  
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I  
feel chilly and grown old.

#### OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE

[1855.]

##### I

THE morn when first it thunders in March,  
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they  
say:

As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch  
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,  
No flash snapped, no dumb thunder rolled  
In the valley beneath where, white and  
wide

And washed by the morning's water-gold,  
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

##### II

River and bridge and street and square  
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,  
Through the live translucent bath of air,  
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.  
And of all I saw and of all I praised,  
The most to praise and the best to see,  
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:  
But why did it more than startle me?

##### III

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,  
Could you play me false who loved you  
so?

Some slights if a certain heart endures  
Yet it feels, I would have your fellows  
know!

I' faith, I perceive not why I should care  
To break a silence that suits them best,  
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear  
When I find a Giotto join the rest.

##### IV

On the arch where olives overhead  
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,  
(That sharp-curled leaf which they never  
shed)

'Twixt the aloes, I used to lean in chief,  
And mark through the winter afternoons,  
By a gift God grants me now and then,  
In the mild decline of those suns like  
moons,

Who walked in Florence, besides her  
men.

##### V

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go  
For pleasure or profit, her men alive —  
My business was hardly with them, I trow,  
But with empty cells of the human hive;  
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,  
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,  
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch,  
Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

##### VI

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,  
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes  
Till the latest life in the painting stops,  
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick  
pains!

One, wishful each scrap should clutch the  
brick,

Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,  
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,  
The wronged great soul of an ancient  
Master.

##### VII

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!  
They are safe in Heaven with their backs  
to it,  
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and  
buzz

Round the works of, you of the little wit!  
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old  
scope,

Now that they see God face to face,  
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?  
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

##### VIII

Much they reck of your praise and you!  
But the wronged great souls — can they  
be quit  
Of a world where their work is all to do,

Where you style them, you of the little wit,

Old Master This and Early the Other,  
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows:

A younger succeeds to an elder brother,  
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

## IX

And here where your praise might yield returns,

And a handsome word or two give help,  
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girms

And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.

What, not a word for Stefano there,  
Of brow once prominent and starry,

Called Nature's Ape and the world's despair  
For his peerless painting? (see Vasari.)

## X

There stands the Master. Study, my friends,

What a man's work comes to! so he plans it,

Performs it, perfects it, makes amends  
For the toiling and moiling, and then,

*sic transit!*

Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,  
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,

Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!

'Tis looking downward that makes one dizzy.

## XI

'If you knew their work you would deal your dole.'

May I take upon me to instruct you?  
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,

Thus much had the world to boast in fructu—

The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,

Which the actual generations garble,  
Was re-uttered, and Soul (which Limbs betoken)

And Limbs (Soul informs) made new in marble.

## XII

So, you saw yourself as you wished you were,

As you might have been, as you cannot be;

Earth here, rebuked by Olympus there:

And grew content in your poor degree  
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,

And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,

And your little grace, by their grace embodied,

And your little date, by their forms that stay.

## XIII

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?

Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.

You'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.

You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo?

You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander!  
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow:

You die—there's the dying Alexander.

## XIV

So, testing your weakness by their strength,  
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,

Measured by Art in your breadth and length,

You learned—to submit is a mortal's duty.

—When I say 'you' 'tis the common soul,  
The collective, I mean: the race of Man  
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,

And grow here according to God's clear plan.

## XV

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,

You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day

And cried with a start—What if we so small

Be greater and grander the while than they!

Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?

In both, of such lower types are we Precisely because of our wider nature;

For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

## XVI

To-day's brief passion limits their range;  
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.

They are perfect—how else? they shall never change;

We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.

The Artificer's hand is not arrested  
With us—we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:

They stand for our copy, and, once invested

With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

## XVII

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—  
The better! what's come to perfection perishes.

Things learned on earth, we shall practise  
in Heaven.  
Works done least rapidly, Art most cher-  
ishes.  
Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!  
Thy one work, not to decrease or dimin-  
ish,  
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?)  
'O!'  
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

## XVIII

Is it true that we are now, and shall be  
hereafter,  
But what and where depend on life's  
minute?

Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter  
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?  
Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,  
Man's face, have no more play and action  
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,  
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction?

## XIX

On which I conclude, that the early paint-  
ers,  
To cries of 'Greek Art and what more  
wish you?'—  
Replied, 'To become now self-acquainters,  
And paint man, man, whatever the issue!  
Make new hopes shine through the flesh  
they fray,  
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:  
To bring the invisible full into play!  
Let the visible go to the dogs—what  
matters?' XX

Give these, I exhort you, their guerdon and  
glory  
For daring so much, before they well did  
it.  
The first of the new, in our race's story,  
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle  
quiddit.  
The worthies began a revolution,  
Which if on earth you intend to acknowl-  
edge,  
Why, honour them now (ends my allocu-  
tion)  
Nor confer your degree when the folks  
leave college.

## XXI

There's a fancy some lean to and others  
hate—  
That, when this life is ended, begins  
New work for the soul in another state,  
Where it strives and gets weary, loses  
and wins;  
Where the strong and the weak, this world's  
congeries,  
Repeat in large what they practised in  
small,  
Through life after life in unlimited series;  
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

xxii  
Yet I hardly know, When a soul has seen  
By the means of Evil that Good is best,  
And through earth and its noise, what is  
Heaven's serene,—  
When its faith in the same has stood the  
test—  
Why, the child grown man, you burn the  
rod,  
The uses of labour are surely done:  
There remaineth a rest for the people of  
God,  
And I have had troubles enough for one.

## XXIII

But at any rate I have loved the season  
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,  
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan,  
And painter—who but Cimabue?  
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,  
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,  
Could say that he missed my critic-meid.  
So now to my special grievance—heigh  
ho!

## XXIV

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,  
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,  
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed  
o'er  
—No getting again what the church has  
grasped!  
The works on the wall must take their  
chance;  
'Works never conceded to England's  
thick clime!'  
(I hope they prefer their inheritance  
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

## XXV

When they go at length, with such a shak-  
ing  
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly  
Each master his way through the black  
streets taking,  
Where many a lost work breathes though  
badly—  
Why don't they bethink them of who has  
merited?  
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree  
Such doom, that a captive's to be out-  
ferreted?  
Why is it they never remember me?

## XXVI

Not that I expect the great Bigordi  
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, belli-  
cose;  
Nor the wronged Lippino; and not a word  
I  
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's:  
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,  
To grant me a taste of your intonaco—  
Some Jerome that seeks the Heaven with a  
sad eye?  
Not a churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

## xxvii

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,  
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,  
Save me a sample, give me the hap  
Of a muscular Christ that shows the  
draughtsman?  
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,  
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly —  
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti  
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

## xxviii

Margheritone of Arezzo,  
With the grave-clothes garb and swad-  
dling barret,  
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,  
You bald, old, saturnine, poll-clawed  
parrot?)  
Not a poor glimmering Crucifixion,  
Where in the foreground kneels the  
donor?  
If such remain, as is my conviction,  
The hoarding it does you but little  
honour.

## xxix

They pass: for them the panels may thrill,  
The tempera grow alive and tinglish —  
Their pictures are left to the mercies still  
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the  
English,  
Who, seeing mere money's worth in their  
prize,  
Will sell it to somebody calm as Zeno  
At naked High Art, and in ecstasies  
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino!

## xxx

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,  
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues  
babble it, —  
Oh, never! it shall not be counted true —  
That a certain precious little tablet  
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover, —  
Was buried so long in oblivion's womb  
And, left for another than I to discover,  
Turns up at last! and to whom? — to  
whom?

## xxxI

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,  
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)  
Patient on altar-steps planting a weary  
toe!  
Nay, I shall have it yet! *detur amanti!*  
My Koh-i-noor — or (if that's a platitude)  
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's  
eye!  
So, in anticipative gratitude,  
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

## xxxII

When the hour grows ripe, and a certain  
dotard  
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,

To the worse side of the Mont Saint  
Gothard,

We shall begin by way of rejoicing;  
None of that shooting the sky (blank  
cartridge),

Nor a civic guard, all plumes and lacquer,  
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge  
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

## xxxIII

This time we'll shoot better game and bag  
'em hot —

No mere display at the stone of Dante,  
But a kind of sober Witanagemot  
(Ex: 'Casa Guidi,' *quod videoes ante*)  
Shall ponder, once Freedom restored to  
Florence,

How Art may return that departed with  
her.

Go, hated house, go each trace of the  
Lorraine's,  
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

## xxxIV

How we shall prologue, how we shall  
perorate,

Utter fit things upon art and history —  
Feel truth at blood-heat and the falsehood  
at zero rate,

Make of the want of the age no mys-  
tery!

Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,  
Show, monarchy ever its uncouth cub  
licks

Out of the bear's shape into Chimaera's —  
While Pure Art's birth is still the re-  
public's!

## xxxV

Then one shall propose in a speech (curt  
Tuscan,

Expurgate and sober, with scarcely an  
*'issimo,'*)

To end now our half-told tale of Cam-  
buscan,

And turn the Bell-tower's *alt* to *altis-  
simo:*

And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia  
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,  
Shall soar up in gold full fifty braccia,  
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

## xxxVI

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold  
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire,  
Like the golden hope of the world, un-  
baffled

Springs from its sleep, and up goes the  
spire

While, 'God and the People' plain for its  
motto,

Thence the new tricolour flaps at the  
sky?

At least to foresee that glory of Giotto  
And Florence together, the first am I!

## 'DE GUSTIBUS—'

[1855.]

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,  
 (If our loves remain)  
 In an English lane,  
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —  
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,  
 Making love, say, —  
 The happier they!  
 Draw yourself up from the light of the  
 moon,  
 And let them pass, as they will too soon,  
 With the beanflowers' boon,  
 And the blackbird's tune,  
 And May, and June!

What I love best in all the world,  
 Is a castle, precipice-encircled,  
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine,  
 (If I get my head from out the mouth  
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
 And come again to the land of lands) —  
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,  
 Where the baked cicadas die of drouth,  
 And one sharp tree — 'tis a cypress —  
 stands,

By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crusted,  
 My sentinel to guard the sands  
 To the water's edge. For, what expands  
 Before the house, but the great opaque  
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?  
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles  
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles  
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
 And says there's news to-day — the king  
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,  
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:  
 — She hopes they have not caught the  
 felons.

Italy, my Italy!

Queen Mary's saying serves for me —  
 (When fortune's malice  
 Lost her, Calais)

Open my heart and you will see  
 Graved inside of it, 'Italy.'  
 Such lovers old are I and she;  
 So it always was, so shall ever be!

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

[1845.]

OH, to be in England  
 Now that April's there,  
 And whoever wakes in England  
 Sees, some morning, unaware,  
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-  
 wood sheep  
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,

While the chaffinch sings on the orchard  
 bough  
 In England — now!

And after April, when May follows,  
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the  
 swallows!  
 Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the  
 hedge  
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
 Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent  
 spray's edge —  
 That's the wise thrush; he sings each song  
 twice over,  
 Lest you should think he never could re-  
 capture  
 The first fine careless rapture!  
 And though the fields look rough with  
 hoary dew,  
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
 The buttercups, the little children's dower  
 — Far brighter than this gaudy melon-  
 flower!

## SAUL

[The first nine stanzas, 1845. — The completed  
 poem, 1855.]

*I should follow  
 Caliban.*

SAID Abner, 'At last thou art come! Ere  
 I tell, ere thou speak,  
 Kiss my cheek, wish me well!' Then  
 wished it, and did kiss his cheek.  
 And he, 'Since the King, O my friend, fo-  
 thy countenance sent,  
 Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor  
 until from his tent  
 Thou return with the joyful assurance the  
 King liveth yet,  
 Shall our lip with the honey be bright,  
 with the water be wet.  
 For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a  
 space of three days,  
 Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants,  
 of prayer or of praise,  
 To be tokened that Saul and the Spirit have  
 ended their strife,  
 And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch  
 sinks back upon life.

## II

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's  
 child, with His dew  
 On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies  
 still living and blue  
 Just broken to twine round thy harp-  
 strings, as if no wild heat  
 Were now raging to torture the desert!

## III

Then I, as was meet,  
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and  
 rose on my feet,  
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.  
 The tent was unlooped;

I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;  
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,  
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on  
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.  
Then once more I prayed,  
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid,  
But spoke, 'Here is David, thy servant!' And no voice replied.  
At the first I saw nought but the blackness; but soon I descried  
A something more black than the blackness — the vast, the upright  
Main prop which sustains the pavilion; and slow into sight  
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all:  
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both arms stretched out wide  
On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to each side;  
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there, as, caught in his pangs  
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all heavily hangs,  
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come  
With the spring-time, — so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp, — took off the lilies we twine round its chords  
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noon tide — those sunbeams like swords!  
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,  
So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be done.  
They are white and un torn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed  
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;  
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star  
Into eve and the blue far above us, — so blue and so far!

VI

— Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate  
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate,  
Till for boldness they fight one another: and then, what has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house —  
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!  
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,  
To give sign, we and they are His children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand And grow one in the sense of this world's life. — And then, the last song When the dead man is praised on his journey — 'Bear, bear him along With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! are balm-seeds not here To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.  
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!' — And then, the glad chaunt Of the marriage, — first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling. — And then, the great march Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends? — Then, the chorus intoned As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned. But I stopped here — for here in the darkness, Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart; And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered — and sparkles 'gan dart From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start — All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart. So the head — but the body still moved not, still hung there erect. And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked, As I sang, —

IX

'Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! no spirit feels waste, Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced. Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock — The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, — the cool silver shock

Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—  
the hunt of the bear,  
And the sultriness showing the lion is  
couched in his lair.  
And the meal—the rich dates yellowed  
over with gold dust divine,  
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the  
pitcher! the full draught of wine,  
And the sleep in the dried river-channe!  
where bulrushes tell  
That the water was wont to go warbling  
so softly and well.  
How good is man's life, the mere living!  
how fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the senses,  
for ever in joy!  
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy  
father, whose sword thou didst guard  
When he trusted thee forth with the armies,  
for glorious reward?  
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy  
mother, held up as men sung  
The low song of the nearly-departed, and  
heard her faint tongue  
Joining in while it could to the witness,  
"Let one more attest,  
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life-  
time, and all was for best!"  
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong  
triumph, not much—but the rest.  
And thy brothers, the help and the contest,  
the working whence grew  
Such result as, from seething grape-bun-  
dles, the spirit strained true!  
And the friends of thy boyhood—that  
boyhood of wonder and hope,  
Present promise, and wealth of the future  
beyond the eye's scope,—  
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a  
people is thine;  
And all gifts, which the world offers singly,  
on one head combine!  
On one head, all the beauty and strength,  
love and rage (like the three  
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour  
and lets the gold go)  
High ambition and deeds which surpass it,  
fame crowning it,—all  
Brought to blaze on the head of one crea-  
ture—King Saul'

## x

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—  
heart, hand, harp and voice,  
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow,  
each bidding rejoice  
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—  
as when, dare I say,  
The Lord's army, in rapture of service,  
strains through its array,  
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—  
'Saul!' cried I, and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow.  
Then Saul, who hung propped  
By the tent's cross-support in the centre,  
was struck by his name.  
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy sum-  
mons goes right to the aim,  
And some mountain, the last to withstand  
her, that held (he alone,  
While the vale laughed in freedom and  
flowers) on a broad bust of stone  
A year's snow bound about for a breast-  
plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?  
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunder-  
ously down to his feet,  
And there fronts you, stark, black, but  
alive yet, your mountain of old,  
With his rents, the successive bequeathings  
of ages untold—  
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles,  
each furrow and scar  
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tem-  
pest—all hail, there they are!  
Now again to be softened with verdure,  
again hold the nest  
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young  
to the green on its crest  
For their food in the arduous of summer!  
One long shudder thrilled  
All the tent till the very air tingled, then  
sank and was stilled  
At the King's self left standing before me,  
released and aware.  
What was gone, what remained? all to  
traverse 'twixt hope and despair;  
Death was past, life not come: so he  
waited. Awhile his right hand  
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too  
vacant forthwith to remand  
To their place what new objects should  
enter; 'twas Saul as before.  
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes,  
nor was hurt any more  
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye  
watch from the shore,  
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a  
sun's slow decline  
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,  
overlap and entwine  
Base with base to knit strength more in-  
tense: so, arm folded in arm  
O'er the chest whose slow heavings sub-  
sided.

## xi

What spell or what charm,  
(For, awhile there was trouble within me)  
what next should I urge  
To sustain him where song had restored  
him?—Song filled to the verge  
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing  
all that it yields  
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the  
beauty! Beyond, on what fields,

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect  
to brighten the eye  
And bring blood to the lip, and command  
them the cup they put by?  
He saith, 'It is good'; still he drinks not:  
he lets me praise life,  
Gives assent, yet would die for his own  
part.

## XII

Then fancies grew rife  
Which had come long ago on the pastures,  
when round me the sheep  
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle  
wheeled slow as in sleep;  
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the  
world that might lie  
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip  
'twixt the hill and the sky:  
And I laughed—'Since my days are or-  
dained to be passed with my flocks,  
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the  
plains and the rocks,  
Dream the life I am never to mix with,  
and image the show  
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I  
hardly shall know!  
Schemes of life, its best rules and right  
uses, the courage that gains,  
And the prudence that keeps what men  
strive for.' And now these old trains  
Of vague thought came again; I grew  
surer; so, once more the string  
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as  
thus—

## XIII

'Yea, my King,'  
I began—'thou dost well in rejecting mere  
comforts that spring  
From the mere mortal life held in common  
by man and by brute:  
In our flesh grows the branch of this life,  
in our soul it bears fruit.  
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,  
— how its stem trembled first  
Till it pass'd the kid's lip, the stag's antler;  
then safely outburst  
The fan-branches all round; and thou  
mindest when these too, in turn  
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed  
perfect: yet more was to learn,  
Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-  
fruit. Our dates shall we slight,  
When their juice brings a cure for all sor-  
row? or care for the plight  
Of the palm's self whose slow growth pro-  
duced them? Not so! stem and branch  
Shall decay, nor be known in their place,  
while the palm-wine shall stanch  
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I  
pour thee such wine.

Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for!  
the spirit be thine!  
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee,  
thou still shalt enjoy  
More indeed, than at first when unconscious,  
the life of a boy.  
Crush that life, and behold its wine run-  
ning! each deed thou hast done  
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;  
until e'en as the sun  
Looking down on the earth, though clouds  
spoil him, though tempests efface,  
Can find nothing his own deed produced  
not, must everywhere trace  
The results of his past summer-prime,— so,  
each ray of thy will,  
Every flash of thy passion and prowess,  
long over, shall thrill  
Thy whole people the countless, with ar-  
dour, till they too give forth  
A like cheer to their sons, who in turn,  
fill the South and the North  
With the radiance thy deed was the germ  
of. Carouse in the Past!  
But the license of age has its limit; thou  
diest at last:  
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the  
rose at her height,  
So with man—so his power and his beauty  
for ever take flight.  
No! again a long draught of my soul-wine!  
look forth o'er the years—  
Thou hast done now with eyes for the  
actual; begin with the seer's!  
Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale  
make his tomb—bid arise  
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-  
square, till built to the skies,  
Let it mark where the great First King  
slumbers: whose fame would ye know?  
Up above see the rock's naked face, where  
the record shall go  
In great characters cut by the scribe,—  
Such was Saul, so he did;  
With the sages directing the work, by the  
populace chid,—  
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised  
there! Which fault to amend,  
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar,  
whereon they shall spend  
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them)  
their praise, and record  
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,  
— the statesman's great word  
Side by side with the poet's sweet com-  
ment. The river's a-wave  
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each  
other when prophet-winds rave:  
So the pen gives unborn generations their  
due and their part  
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty,  
thank God that thou art!'

## xiv

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou  
who didst grant me that day,  
And before it not seldom hast granted Thy  
help to essay  
Carry on and complete an adventure, — my  
Shield and my Sword  
In that act where my soul was Thy servant,  
Thy word was my word, —  
Still be with me, who then at the summit  
of human endeavour  
And scaling the highest, man's thought  
could, gazed hopeless as ever  
On the new stretch of Heaven above me —  
till, mighty to save,  
Just one lift of Thy hand cleared that dis-  
tance — God's throne from man's  
grave!  
Let me tell out my tale to its ending — my  
voice to my heart  
Which can scarce dare believe in what  
marvels last night I took part,  
As this morning I gather the fragments,  
alone with my sheep,  
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish  
like sleep!  
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while  
Hebron upheaves  
The dawn struggling with night on his  
shoulder, and Kidron retrieves  
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

## xv

I say then, — my song  
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch,  
and ever more strong  
Made a proffer of good to console him —  
he slowly resumed  
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The  
right hand replumed  
His black locks to their wonted composure,  
adjusted the swathes  
Of his turban, and see — the huge sweat  
that his countenance bathes,  
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds  
now his loins as of yore,  
And feels slow for the armlets of price,  
with the clasp set before.  
He is Saul, ye remember in glory, — ere  
error had bent  
The broad brow from the daily communion;  
and still, though much spent  
Be the life and the bearing that front you,  
the same, God did choose,  
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate,  
never quite lose.  
So sank he along by the tent-prop till,  
stayed by the pile  
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments,  
he leaned there awhile.  
And so sat out my singing, — one arm  
round the tent-prop, to raise  
His bent head, and the other hung slack —  
till I touched on the praise

I foresaw from all men in all times, to  
the man patient there;  
And thus ended, the harp falling forward.  
Then first I was 'ware  
That he sat, as I say, with my head just  
above his vast knees  
Which were thrust out on each side around  
me, like oak roots which please  
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I  
looked up to know  
If the best I could do had brought solace:  
he spoke not, but slow  
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he  
laid it with care  
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on  
my brow; thro' my hair  
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent  
back my head, with kind power —  
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men  
do a flower.  
Thus held he me there with his great eyes  
that scrutinized mine —  
And oh, all my heart how it loved him!  
but where was the sign?  
I yearned — 'Could I help thee, my father,  
inventing a bliss,  
I would add to that life of the Past, both  
the Future and this;  
I would give thee new life altogether, as  
good, ages hence,  
As this moment, — had love but the war-  
rant, love's heart to dispense!"

## xvi

Then the truth came upon me. No harp  
more — no song more! outbroke —

*hand speaking*

## xvii

'I have gone the whole round of Creation:  
I saw and I spoke!  
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,  
as a turban was received in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of His hand-  
work — returned Him again  
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke  
as I saw.  
I report, as a man may of God's work —  
all 's love, yet all 's law!  
Now I lay down the judgeship He lent me.  
Each faculty tasked  
To perceive Him, has gained an abyss,  
where a dewdrop was asked.  
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels  
at Wisdom laid bare.  
Have I forethought? how purblind, how  
blank, to the Infinite Care!  
Do I task any faculty highest, to image  
success?  
I but open my eyes, — and perfection, no  
more and no less,  
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and,  
God is seen God  
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in  
the soul and the clod.

And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew  
 (With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)  
 The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete,  
 As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to His feet!  
 Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,  
 I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.  
 There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink.  
 I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)  
 Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst  
 E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold! I could love if I durst!  
 But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake  
 God's own speed in the one way of love:  
 I abstain for love's sake.  
 —What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small.  
 Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?  
 In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?  
 Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,  
 That I doubt His own love can compete with it? here, the parts shift?  
 Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began?—  
 Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,  
 And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?  
 Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,  
 To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower  
 Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,  
 Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?  
 And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)  
 These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?  
 Aye, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height  
 This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring, death's minute of night?  
 Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,  
 Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake  
 From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set

Clear and safe in new light and new life,—  
 a new harmony yet  
 To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure?  
 The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;  
 By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,  
 And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

## xviii

'I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:  
 In the first is the last, in Thy will is my power to believe.  
 All's one gift: Thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer  
 As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.  
 From Thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, Thy dread Sabaoth:  
 I will?—the mere atoms despise me! why am I not loath  
 To look that, even that in the face too? why is it I dare  
 Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my despair?  
 This;—'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!  
 See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.  
 Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,  
 To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,  
 I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!  
 Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou—so wilt Thou!  
 So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—  
 And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down  
 One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,  
 Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!  
 As Thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved  
 Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!  
 He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.  
 'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek  
 In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be  
 A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,  
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand  
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!'

## XIX

I know not too well how I found my way  
home in the night.  
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to  
left and to right,  
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the  
alive, the aware—  
I repressed, I got through them as hardly,  
as strugglingly there,  
As a runner beset by the populace famished  
for news—  
Life or death. The whole earth was  
awakened, hell loosed with her crews;  
And the stars of night beat with emotion,  
and tingled and shot  
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowl-  
edge: but I fainted not,  
For the Hand still impelled me at once  
and supported, suppressed  
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,  
and holy behest,  
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the  
earth sank to rest.  
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had  
withered from earth—  
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the  
day's tender birth;  
In the gathered intensity brought to the  
grey of the hills;  
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in  
the sudden wind-thrills;  
In the startled wild beasts that bore off,  
each with eye sidling still  
Though averted with wonder and dread;  
in the birds stiff and chill  
That rose heavily, as I approached them,  
made stupid with awe!  
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he  
felt the new Law.  
The same stared in the white humid faces  
upturned by the flowers;  
The same worked in the heart of the cedar,  
and moved the vine-bowers:  
And the little brooks witnessing murmured,  
persistent and low,  
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices  
—E'en so, it is so!"

## MY STAR

[1855.]

ALL that I know  
Of a certain star,  
Is, it can throw  
(Like the angled spar)  
Now a dart of red,  
Now a dart of blue;  
Till my friends have said  
They would fain see, too,  
My star that dartles the red and the blue!  
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower,  
hangs furled:

They must solace themselves with the  
Saturn above it.  
What matter to me if their star is a world?  
Mine has opened its soul to me; there-  
fore I love it.

## BY THE FIRE-SIDE

[1855.]

How well I know what I mean to do  
When the long dark Autumn evenings  
come:  
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?  
With the music of all thy voices, dumb  
In life's November too!

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,  
O'er a great wise book as becometh age,  
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind  
blows,

And I turn the page, and I turn the page,  
Not verse now, only prose!

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,  
'There he is at it, deep in Greek:  
Now, then, or never, out we slip  
To cut from the hazels by the creek  
A mainmast for our ship!'

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!  
Greek puts already on either side  
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends  
To a vista opening far and wide,  
And I pass out where it ends.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees —  
But the inside-archway narrows fast.  
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,  
And we slope to Italy at last  
And youth, by green degrees.

I follow wherever I am led,  
Knowing so well the leader's hand:  
Oh, woman-country, wooed not wed,  
Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,  
Laid to their hearts instead!

Look at the ruined chapel again  
Half-way up in the Alpine gorge.  
Is that a tower, I point you plain,  
Or is it a mill, or an iron forge  
Breaks solitude in vain?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;  
The woods are round us, heaped and  
dim;  
From slab to slab how it slips and  
springs—

The thread of water single and slim,  
Through the ravage some torrent brings!

Does it feed the little lake below?  
That speck of white just on its marge  
Is Pella; see, in the evening-glow,  
How sharp the silver spear-heads charge  
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

On our other side is the straight-up rock;  
And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it  
By boulder-stones where lichens mock  
The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit  
Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,  
And the thorny balls, each three in one,  
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers!  
—For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,  
These early November hours,

That crimson the creeper's leaf across  
Like a splash of blood intense, abrupt,  
O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,  
And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped  
Elf-needed mat of moss,

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged  
Last evening — nay, in to-day's first dew  
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged  
Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew  
Of toadstools peep indulged.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge  
That takes the turn to a range beyond,  
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge  
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond  
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,  
Blackish-grey and mostly wet;  
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.  
See here again, how the lichens fret  
And the roots of the ivy strike!

Poor little place, where its one priest comes  
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,  
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,  
Gathered within that precinct small  
By the dozen ways one roams —

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,  
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,  
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,  
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread  
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,  
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise  
Set over the porch, Art's early wont:  
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,  
But has borne the weather's brunt —

Not from the fault of the builder, though,  
For a pent-house properly projects  
Where three carved beams make a certain show,  
Dating — good thought of our architect's —  
Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

And all day long a bird sings there,  
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times;  
The place is silent and aware;  
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,  
But that is its own affair.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,  
Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,  
Whom else could I dare look backward for,  
With whom beside should I dare pursue  
The path grey heads abhor?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;  
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops —  
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,  
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,  
One inch from life's safe hem!

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,  
No longer watch you as you sit  
Reading by fire-light, that great brow  
And the spirit-small hand propping it,  
Mutely, my heart knows how —

When, if I think but deep enough,  
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;  
And you, too, find without a rebuff  
The response your soul seeks many a time  
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

My own, confirm me! If I tread  
This path back, is it not in pride  
To think how little I dreamed it led  
To an age so blest that by its side  
Youth seems the waste instead?

My own, see where the years conduct!  
At first, 'twas something our two souls  
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked  
Into each now: on, the new stream rolls,  
Whatever rocks obstruct.

Think, when our one soul understands  
The great Word which makes all things new —  
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands —  
How will the change strike me and you  
In the House not made with hands?

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,  
Your heart anticipate my heart,  
You must be just before, in fine,  
See and make me see, for your part,  
New depths of the Divine!

But who could have expected this,  
When we two drew together first  
Just for the obvious human bliss,  
To satisfy life's daily thirst  
With a thing men seldom miss?

Come back with me to the first of all,  
Let us lean and love it over again—  
Let us now forget and now recall,  
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,  
And gather what we let fall!

What did I say? — that a small bird sings  
All day long, save when a brown pair  
Of hawks from the wood float with wide  
wings  
Strained to a bell; 'gainst the noonday  
glare  
You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve  
'Tis better; then the silence grows  
To that degree, you half believe  
It must get rid of what it knows,  
Its bosom does so heave.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,  
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,  
And still I questioned or replied,  
While my heart, convulsed to really  
speak,  
Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,  
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,  
And care about the fresco's loss,  
And wish for our souls a like retreat,  
And wonder at the moss.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—  
Look through the window's grated  
square:  
Nothing to see! for fear of plunder,  
The cross is down and the altar bare,  
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,  
See the little porch and rustic door,  
Read duly the dead builder's date,  
Then cross the bridge we crossed before,  
Take the path again — but wait!

Oh moment, one and infinite!  
The water slips o'er stock and stone;  
The West is tender, hardly bright:  
How grey at once is the evening grown—  
One star, the chrysolite!

We two stood there with never a third,  
But each by each, as each knew well:  
The sights we saw and the sounds we  
heard,  
The lights and the shades made up a  
spell  
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!  
And the little less, and what worlds  
away!

How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,  
Or a breath suspend the blood's best  
play,  
And life be a proof of this!

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen  
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and  
her:

I could fix her face with a guard between,  
And find her soul as when friends confer,  
Friends — lovers that might have been.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,

Wanting to sleep now over its best.  
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,  
But bring to the last leaf no such test:  
'Hold the last fast!' runs the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,  
To gain a lover and lose a friend,  
Venture the tree and a myriad such,  
When nothing you mar but the year can  
mend!

But a last leaf — fear to touch!

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall  
Eddying down till it find your face  
At some slight wind — (best chance of all)  
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place  
You trembled to forestall!

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,  
— That hair so dark and dear, how worth  
That a man should strive and agonize,  
And taste a very hell on earth  
For the hope of such a prize!

You might have turned and tried a man,  
Set him a space to weary and wear,  
And prove which suited more your plan,  
His best of hope or his worst despair,  
Yet end as he began.

But you spared me this, like the heart you  
are,  
And filled my empty heart at a word.  
If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,  
They are one and one, with a shadowy  
third;  
One near one is too far.

A moment after, and hands unseen  
Were hanging the night around us fast;  
But we knew that a bar was broken be-  
tween

Life and life: we were mixed at last  
In spite of the mortal screen.

The forests had done it; there they stood;  
We caught for a second the powers at play:  
They had mingled us so, for once and for good,  
Their work was done—we might go or stay,  
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

How the world is made for each of us!  
How all we perceive and know in it  
Tends to some moment's product thus,  
When a soul declares itself—to wit,  
By its fruit—the thing it does!

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,  
It forwards the general deed of man,  
And each of the Many helps to recruit  
The life of the race by a general plan;  
Each living his own, to boot.

I am named and known by that moment's  
feat;  
There took my station and degree:  
So grew my own small life complete,  
As nature obtained her best of me—  
One born to love you, sweet!

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now  
Back again, as you mutely sit  
Musing by fire-light, that great brow  
And the spirit-small hand propping it  
Yonder, my heart knows how!

So, the earth has gained by one man more,  
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too;  
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er  
When the autumn comes: which I mean  
to do  
One day, as I said before.

### TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA

[1855.]

*clawed*  
I WONDER do you feel to-day  
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,  
We sat down on the grass, to stray  
In spirit better through the land,  
This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,  
Has tantalized me many times,  
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw  
Mocking across' our path) for rhymes  
To catch at and let go.

Help me to hold it! First it left  
The yellowing fennel, run to seed  
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,  
Some old tomb's ruin; yonder weed  
Took up the floating wuft,

Where one small orange cup amassed  
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope

Among the honey-meal: and last,  
Everywhere on the grassy slope  
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece  
Of feathery grasses everywhere!  
Silence and passion, joy and peace,  
An everlasting wash of air—  
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,  
Such miracles performed in play,  
Such primal naked forms of flowers,  
Such letting Nature have her way  
While Heaven looks from its towers!

How say you? Let us, O my dove,  
Let us be unashamed of soul,  
As earth lies bare to heaven above!  
How is it under our control  
To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,  
You that are just so much, no more.  
Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free!  
Where does the fault lie? what the core  
Of the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,  
See with your eyes, and set my heart  
Beating by yours, and drink my fill  
At your soul's springs,—your part, my part  
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward, touch you close,  
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,  
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose  
And love it more than tongue can speak—  
Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far  
Out of that minute? Must I go  
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,  
Onward, whenever light winds blow,  
Fixed by no friendly star?  
Just when I seemed about to learn!  
Where is the thread now? Off again!  
The old trick! Only I discern—  
Infinite passion, and the pain  
Of finite hearts that yearn.

### MISCONCEPTIONS

[1855.]

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,  
Making it blossom with pleasure,  
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
Oh, what a hope beyond measure

Was the poor spray's, which the flying  
feet hung to,—  
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!  
This is a heart the Queen leant on,  
Thrilled in a minute erratic,  
Ere the true bosom she bent on,  
Meet for love's regal dalmatic.  
Oh, what a fancy ecstatic  
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer  
went on—  
Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent  
on!

## A SERENADE AT THE VILLA

[1855.]

THAT was I, you heard last night  
When there rose no moon at all,  
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight  
Tent of heaven, a planet small:  
Life was dead, and so was light.

Not a twinkle from the fly,  
Not a glimmer from the worm.  
When the crickets stopped their cry,  
When the owls forbore a term,  
You heard music; that was I.  
Earth turned in her sleep with pain,  
Sultrily suspired for proof:  
In at heaven and out again,  
Lightning! — where it broke the roof,  
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

What they could my words expressed,  
O my Love, my All, my One!  
Singing helped the verses best,  
And when singing's best was done,  
To my lute I left the rest.

So wore night; the East was grey,  
White the broad-faced hemlock-flowers;  
There would be another day;  
Ere its first of heavy hours  
Found me, I had passed away.

What became of all the hopes,  
Words and song and lute as well?  
Say, this struck you—'When life gropes  
Feebly for the path where fell  
Light last on the evening slopes,

'One friend in that path shall be  
To secure my steps from wrong:  
One to count night day for me,  
Patient through the watches long,  
Serving most with none to see.'

Never say—as something bodes—  
'So, the worst has yet a worse!  
When life halts 'neath double loads,  
Better the taskmaster's curse  
Than such music on the roads!'

'When no moon succeeds the sun,  
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent  
Any star, the smallest one,  
While some drops, where lightning went,  
Show the final storm begun—

'When the fire-fly hides its spot,  
When the garden-voices fail  
In the darkness thick and hot,—  
Shall another voice avail,  
That shape be where these are not?

'Has some plague a longer lease  
Proffering its help uncouth?  
Can't one even die in peace?  
As one shuts one's eyes on youth,  
Is that face the last one sees?'

Oh, how dark your villa was,  
Windows fast and obdurate!  
How the garden grudged me grass  
Where I stood—the iron gate  
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

## ONE WAY OF LOVE

[1855.]

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves  
And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
She will not turn aside? Alas!  
Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit  
These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
To-day I venture all I know.  
She will not hear my music? So!  
Break the string; fold music's wing:  
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

My whole life long I learned to love.  
This hour my utmost art I prove  
And speak my passion.—Heaven or Hell?  
She will not give me Heaven? 'Tis well!  
Lose who may—I still can say,  
Those who win Heaven, blest are they!

## ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE

[1855.]

JUNE was not over,  
Though past the full,  
And the best of her roses  
Had yet to blow,  
When a man I know  
(But shall not discover,  
Since ears are dull,  
And time discloses)  
Turned him and said with a man's true air,  
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were—  
'If I tire of your June, will she greatly  
care?'

Well, Dear, indoors with you!  
 True, serene deadness  
 Tries a man's temper.  
 What's in the blossom  
 June wears on her bosom?  
 Can it clear scores with you?  
 Sweetness and redness,  
*Eadem semper!*

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!  
 If June mends her bowers now, your hand  
 left unsightly  
 By plucking their roses,— my June will do  
 rightly,

And after, for pastime,  
 If June be resplendent  
 With flowers in completeness,  
 All petals, no prickles,  
 Delicious as trickles  
 Of wine poured at mass-time,—  
 And choose One indulgent  
 To redness and sweetness:  
 Or if, with experience of man and of spider,  
 June use my June-lightning, the strong  
 insect-ridder,  
 And stop the fresh spinning,— why, June  
 will consider.

## RESPECTABILITY

[1855.]

DEAR, had the world in its caprice  
 Deigned to proclaim 'I know you both,  
 Have recognized your plighted troth,  
 Am sponsor for you: live in peace!'—  
 How many precious months and years  
 Of youth had passed, that speed so fast,  
 Before we found it out at last,  
 The world, and what it fears?

How much of priceless life were spent  
 With men that every virtue decks,  
 And women models of their sex,  
 Society's true ornament,—  
 Ere we dared wander, nights like this,  
 Thro' wind and rain, and watch the  
 Seine,  
 And feel the Boulevard break again  
 To warmth and light and bliss?

I know! the world proscribes not love;  
 Allows my finger to caress  
 Your lip's contour and downiness,  
 Provided it supply a glove.  
 The world's good word! — the Institute!  
 Guizot receives Montalembert!  
 Eh? down the court three lampions  
 flare—  
 Put forward your best foot!

## LOVE IN A LIFE

[1855.]

Room after room,  
 I hunt the house through  
 We inhabit together.  
 Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt  
 find her,  
 Next time, herself! — not the trouble be-  
 hind her  
 Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!  
 As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blos-  
 somed anew:  
 Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of  
 her feather.

Yet the day wears,  
 And door succeeds door;  
 I try the fresh fortune —  
 Range the wide house from the wing to  
 the centre.  
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.  
 Spend my whole day in the quest, — who  
 cares?  
 But 'tis twilight, you see, — with such  
 suites to explore,  
 Such closets to search, such alcoves to im-  
 portune!

## LIFE IN A LOVE

[1855.]

## ESCAPE me?

Never —

Beloved!

While I am I, and you are you,  
 So long as the world contains us both,  
 Me the loving and you the loath,  
 While the one eludes, must the other  
 pursue.

My life is a fault at last, I fear:  
 It seems too much like a fate, indeed!  
 Though I do my best I shall scarce suc-  
 ceed.

But what if I fail of my purpose here?  
 It is but to keep the nerves at strain,  
 To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,  
 And baffled, get up and begin again, —  
 So the chase takes up one's life, that's all.  
 While, look but once from your farthest  
 bound

At me so deep in the dust and dark,  
 No sooner the old hope goes to ground  
 Than a new one, straight to the selfsame  
 mark,

I shape me —  
 Ever  
 Removed!

## IN A YEAR

[1855.]

NEVER any more  
While I live,  
Need I hope to see his face  
As before.  
Once his love grown chill,  
Mine may strive—  
Bitterly we re-embrace,  
Single still.

Was it something said,  
Something done,  
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,  
Turn of head?  
Strange! that very way  
Love begun:  
I as little understand  
Love's decay.  
  
When I sewed or drew,  
I recall  
How he looked as if I sung,  
— Sweetly too.  
If I spoke a word,  
First of all  
Up his cheek the colour sprung,  
Then he heard.

Sitting by my side,  
At my feet,  
So he breathed but air I breathed,  
Satisfied!  
I, too, at love's brim  
Touched the sweet:  
I would die if death bequeathed  
Sweet to him.

'Speak, I love thee best!'  
He exclaimed:  
'Let thy love my own foretell,'  
I confessed:  
'Clasp my heart on thine  
Now unblamed,  
Since upon thy soul as well  
Hangeth mine!'

Was it wrong to own,  
Being truth?  
Why should all the giving prove  
His alone?  
I had wealth and ease,  
Beauty, youth—  
Since my lover gave me love,  
I gave these.

That was all I meant,  
— To be just,  
And the passion I had raised,  
To content,  
Since he chose to change  
Gold for dust,  
If I gave him what he praised  
Was it strange?

Would he loved me yet,  
On and on,  
While I found some way undreamed  
— Paid my debt!  
Gave more life and more,  
Till, all gone,  
He should smile 'She never seemed  
Mine before.

'What — she felt the while,  
Must I think?  
Love 's so different with us men,'  
He should smile.  
'Dying for my sake—  
White and pink!  
Can't we touch these bubbles then  
But they break?'

Dear, the pang is brief,  
Do thy part,  
Have thy pleasure. How perplext  
Grows belief!  
Well, this cold clay clod  
Was man's heart.  
Crumble it — and what comes next?  
Is it God?

## THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

*of his friend Alfred Donetti.*

A PICTURE AT FANO

[1855.]

DEAR and great Angel, wouldest thou only  
leave  
That child, when thou hast done with  
him, for me!  
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
Shall find performed thy special ministry  
And time come for departure, thou, sus-  
pending  
Thy flight, mayst see another child for  
tending,  
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no  
more,  
From where thou standest now, to where  
I gaze,  
— And suddenly my head is covered o'er  
With those wings, white above the child  
who prays  
Now on that tomb — and I shall feel thee  
guarding  
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding  
Yon Heaven thy home, that waits and  
opes its door!

I would not look up thither past thy head  
Because the door opes, like that child, I  
know,  
For I should have thy gracious face instead.  
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend  
me low

Like him, and lay, like his, my hands  
together,  
And lift them up to pray, and gently  
tether  
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's  
spread?

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
My head beneath thine, while thy healing  
hands  
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy  
breast,  
Pressing the brain, which too much  
thought expands,  
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
Distortion down till every nerve had sooth-  
ing,  
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be re-  
paired!  
I think how I should view the earth and  
skies  
And sea, when once again my brow was  
bared  
After thy healing, with such different  
eyes.  
O world, as God has made it! all is beauty:  
And knowing this, is love, and love is  
duty.  
What further may be sought for or  
declared?

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
(Alfred, dear friend!) — that little child  
to pray,  
Holding the little hands up, each to each  
Pressed gently,— with his own head  
turned away  
Over the earth where so much lay before  
him  
Of work to do, though Heaven was opening  
o'er him,  
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
To sit and see him in his chapel there,  
And drink his beauty to our soul's content  
— My angel with me too: and since I  
care  
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in  
power  
And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent),

And since he did not work so earnestly  
At all times, and has else endured some  
wrong —  
I took one thought his picture struck from  
me,  
And spread it out, translating it to song.

My Love is here. Where are you, dear  
old friend?  
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far  
end?  
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

## MEMORABILIA

[1855.]

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you?  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems, and new!

But you were living before that,  
And also you are living after,  
And the memory I started at —  
My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own  
And a certain use in the world no doubt,  
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather  
And there I put inside my breast  
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather —  
Well, I forgot the rest.

## POPULARITY

[1855.]

STAND still, true poet that you are!  
I know you; let me try and draw you.  
Some night you'll fail us: when afar  
You rise, remember one man saw you,  
Knew you, and named a star!

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend  
That loving hand of His which leads you,  
Yet locks you safe from end to end  
Of this dark world, unless He needs  
you —  
Just saves your light to spend?

His clenched Hand shall unclose at last,  
I know, and let out all the beauty:  
My poet holds the Future fast,  
Accepts the coming ages' duty,  
Their Present for this Past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow  
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;  
'Others give best at first, but Thou  
Forever set'st our table praising,  
Keep'st the good wine till now!'

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,  
With few or none to watch and wonder:  
I'll say — a fisher, on the sand  
By Tyre the Old, with ocean-plunder,  
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells  
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes  
Whereof one drop worked miracles,  
And coloured like Astarte's eyes  
Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all  
Could criticize, and quote tradition  
How depths of blue sublimed some pall  
— To get which, pricked a king's ambition;  
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

Yet there's the dye, in that rough mesh,  
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!  
Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,  
As if they still the water's lisp heard  
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon  
Such hangings for his cedar-house,  
That, when gold-robed he took the throne  
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse  
Might swear his presence shone

Most like the centre-spike of gold  
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's  
womb,  
What time, with ardours manifold,  
The bee goes singing to her groom,  
Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!  
Till cunning comes to pound and squeeze  
And clarify,— refine to proof  
The liquor filtered by degrees,  
While the world stands aloof.

And there's the extract, flasked and fine,  
And priced and saleable at last!  
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes  
combine  
To paint the Future from the Past,  
Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue,— straight he turtle eats:  
Nobbs prints blue,— claret crowns his  
cup:  
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—  
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?  
What porridge had John Keats?

#### MASTER HUGUES OF SAXE-GOTHA [1855.]

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!  
Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!  
Answer the question I've put you so oft—  
What do you mean by your mountainous  
fugues?  
See, we're alone in the loft,—

I, the poor organist here,  
Hugues, the composer of note—  
Dead, though, and done with, this many a  
year:

Let's have a colloquy, something to  
quote,  
Make the world prick up its ear!

See, the church empties apace:  
Fast they extinguish the lights—  
Hallo there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!  
Here's a crank pedal wants setting to  
rights,  
Balks one of holding the base.

See, our huge house of the sounds,  
Hushing its hundreds at once,  
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds!  
— Oh, you may challenge them, not a  
response  
Get the church-saints on their rounds!

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?  
— March, with the moon to admire,  
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about.  
Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,  
Put rats and mice to the rout —

Aloys and Jurien and Just —  
Order things back to their place,  
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust.  
Rub the church-plate, darn the sacrament-  
lace,  
Clear the desk-velvet of dust.)

Here's your book, younger folks shelfe!  
Played I not off-hand and runnily,  
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number  
twelve?

Here's what should strike,— could one  
handle it cunningly:  
Help the axe, give it a helve!

Page after page as I played,  
Every bar's rest, where one wipes  
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and  
surveyed,  
O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes  
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

Sure you were wishful to speak,  
You, with brow ruled like a score  
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,  
Like two great breves as they wrote them  
of yore  
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

Sure you said — 'Good, the mere notes!  
Still, couldst thou take my intent,  
Know what procured me our Company's  
votes —  
Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,  
Parted the sheep from the goats!'

Well then, speak up, never flinch!  
 Quick, ere my candle's a snuff  
 — Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost  
 inch —

I believe in you, but that's not enough:  
 Give my conviction a clinch!

First you deliver your phrase

— Nothing propound, that I see  
 Fit in itself for much blame or much  
 praise —

Answered no less, where no answer needs  
 be:

Off start the Two on their ways!

Straight must a Third interpose,

Volunteer needlessly help —

In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his  
 nose,

So the cry's open, the kennel's a-yelp,  
 Argument's hot to the close!

One dissertates, he is candid;

Two must discept, — has distinguished;

Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did;

Four protests; Five makes a dart at the  
 thing wished:

Back to One, goes the case bandied.

One says his say with a difference —

More of expounding, explaining!

All now is wrangle, abuse and vociferance —

Now there's a truce, all's subdued, self-  
 restraining —

Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

One is incisive, corrosive;

Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant;

Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explo-  
 sive;

Four overbears them all, strident and  
 strepitant:

Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

Now, they ply axes and crowbars;

Now, they prick pins at a tissue

Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's  
 Worked on the bone of a lie. To what  
 issue?

Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

*Est fuga, volvitur rotâ!*

On we drift. Where looms the dim port?

One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute  
 their quota —

Something is gained, if one caught but  
 the import —

Show it us, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

What with affirming, denying,

Holding, riposting, subjoining,

All 's like . . . it 's like . . . for an  
 instance I'm trying . . .

There! See our roof, its gilt moulding  
 and groining

Under those spider-webs lying!

So your fugue broadens and thickens,  
 Greatens and deepens and lengthens,  
 Till one exclaims — 'But where 's music,  
 the dickens?

Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web  
 strengthens

— Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?

I for man's effort am zealous:

Prove me such censure 's unfounded!

Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous —

Hopes 'twas for something his organ-  
 pipes sounded,

Tiring three boys at the bellows?

Is it your moral of Life?

Such a web, simple and subtle,

Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,  
 Backward and forward each throwing

his shuttle,

Death ending all with a knife?

Over our heads Truth and Nature —

Still our life 's zigzags and dodges,  
 Ins and outs, weaving a new legislature —

God's gold just shining its last where  
 that lodges,

Palled beneath Man's usurpature!

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,

Cherub and trophy and garland.

Nothings grow something which quietly  
 closes

Heaven's earnest eye, — not a glimpse of  
 the far land

Gets through our comments and glozes.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,

(Say we and make up a visage)

So many men with such various intentions  
 Down the past ages must know more  
 than this age!

Leave the web all its dimensions!

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,

Proved a mere mountain in labour?

Better submit — try again — what 's the  
 clef?

'Faith, it 's no trifle for pipe and for  
 tabor —

Four flats, the minor in F.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger:

Learning it once, who would lose it?

Yet all the while a misgiving will linger,  
 Truth 's golden o'er us although we re-  
 fuse it —

Nature, thro' cobwebs we string her.

Hugues! I advise *méâ poénâ*

(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)

Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear  
 the arena!

Say the word, straight I unstop the Full-  
 Organ,

Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

While in the roof, if I'm right there,  
... Lo, you, the wick in the socket!  
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!  
Down it dips, gone like a rocket!  
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,  
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,  
And find a poor devil has ended his cares  
At the foot of your rotten-runged rat-riddled stairs?  
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP  
[1842.]

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:  
A mile or so away  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming-day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused 'My plans  
That soar, to earth may fall,  
Let once my army-leader Lannes  
Waver at yonder wall,'—  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
You hardly could suspect—  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

'Well,' cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace  
We've got you Ratisbon!  
The Marshal's in the market-place,  
And you'll be there anon  
To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
Where I, to heart's desire,  
Perched him!' The Chief's eye flashed;  
his plans  
Soared up again like fire.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes:  
'You're wounded!' 'Nay,' his soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
'I'm killed, Sire!' And his Chief beside,  
Smiling the boy fell dead.

## MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

[1842.]

THAT 's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive; I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her?  
I said ~~somebody with her~~.  
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst ~~sake not easily interrogated~~  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps  
Over my Lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat'; such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart . . . how shall I say? . . . too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace — all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,— good; but thanked  
Somehow . . . I know not how . . . as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech — (which I have not) — to make  
your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say 'Just  
this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark' — and if she let.  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made  
excuse,

— E'en then would be some stooping, and  
I choose

Never to stoop. Oh, Sir, she smiled, no  
doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed  
without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave  
commands; ~~He's running a new~~

Then all smiles stopped together. There  
she stands

As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll  
meet

The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your Master's known munifi-  
cence

Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter's self, as I  
avowed ~~action! Come down for~~

At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune,

though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze  
for me.

#### THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

[Published in *Hood's Magazine*, 1844. — Reprinted  
and revised, 1845.]

MORNING, evening, noon and night  
'Praise God,' sang Theocrate.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell:

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, 'Praise God.'

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, 'Well done;  
I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

'As well as if thy voice to-day  
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

'This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
Praises God from Peter's dome.'

Said Theocrate, 'Would God that I  
Might praise Him, that great way, and die!'

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrate was gone.

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, 'Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight.'

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Liv'd there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night  
Praised God in place of Theocrate.

And from a boy, to youth he grew:  
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, 'A praise is in mine ear;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear:

'So sing old worlds, and so  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

'Clearer loves sound other ways:  
I miss my little human praise.'

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off  
fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'Twas Easter Day: he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrate:

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned.  
And on his sight the angel burned.

'I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,  
And set thee here; I did not well.

'Vainly I left my angel-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

'Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it  
dropped—  
Creation's chorus stopped!

'Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

'With that weak voice of our disdain,  
Take up Creation's pausing strain.

'Back to the cell and poor employ:  
Become the craftsman and the boy!'

Theocrite grew old at home;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's Dome.

One vanished as the other died:  
They sought God side by side.

### THE GLOVE

[1845.]

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

'HEIGHO,' yawned one day King Francis,  
'Distance all value enhances!  
When a man's busy, why, leisure  
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:  
'Faith, and at leisure once is he?  
Straightway he wants to be busy.  
Here we've got peace; andaghast I'm  
Caught thinking war the true pastime!  
Is there a reason in metre?  
Give us your speech, master Peter!'  
I who, if mortal dare say so,  
Ne'er am at loss with my Naso,  
'Sire,' I replied, 'joys prove cloudlets:  
Men are the merest Ixions'—  
Here the King whistled aloud, 'Let's  
... Heigho ... go look at our lions!'  
Such are the sorrowful chances  
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,  
Our company, Francis was leading,  
Increased by new followers tenfold  
Before he arrived at the penfold;  
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen  
At sunset the western horizon.  
And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost

With the dame he professed to adore  
most—  
Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed  
Her, and the terrible pitside;  
For the penfold surrounded a hollow  
Which led where the eye scarce dared  
follow.

And shelved to the chamber secluded  
Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.  
The King hailed his keeper, an Arab  
As glossy and black as a scarab,  
And bade him make sport and at once stir  
Up and out of his den the old monster,

They opened a hole in the wire-work  
Across it, and dropped there a firework,  
And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;  
A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,

The blackness and silence so utter,  
By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;

Then earth in a sudden contortion  
Gave out to our gaze her abortion!  
Such a brute! Were I friend Clement  
Marot

(Whose experience of nature's but narrow,  
And whose faculties move in no small mist  
When he versifies David the Psalmist)  
I should study that brute to describe you  
*Illum Judae Leonem de Tribu!*  
One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy  
To see the black mane, vast and heapy,  
The tail in the air stiff and straining,  
The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,  
As over the barrier which bounded  
His platform, and us who surrounded  
The barrier, they reached and they rested  
On the space that might stand him in best stead:

For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,

The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,  
And if, in this minute of wonder,  
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,  
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered.  
The lion at last was delivered?

Aye, that was the open sky o'erhead!  
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,  
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,  
He was leagues in the desert already,  
Driving the flocks up the mountain,  
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain  
To waylay the date-gathering negress:  
So guarded he entrance or egress.

'How he stands!' quoth the King: 'we may well swear,

(No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere,  
And so can afford the confession.)  
We exercise wholesome discretion  
In keeping aloof from his threshold;  
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,

Their first would too pleasantly purloin  
The visitor's brisket or sirloin:  
But who's he would prove so foolhardy?  
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!

The sentence no sooner was uttered,  
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,  
Fell close to the lion, and rested:  
The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested  
With life so, De Lorge had been wooing  
For months past; he sat there pursuing  
His suit, weighing out with nonchalance  
Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

Sound the trumpet, no true knight 's a  
barrier!

De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,  
Walked straight to the glove,—while the  
lion

Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on  
The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphires,

And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—  
Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,  
Leaped back where the lady was seated,  
And full in the face of its owner  
Flung the glove.

'Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?  
So should I!'—cried the King—'twas  
mere vanity,

Not love, set that task to humanity!  
Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing  
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I; for I caught an expression  
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession  
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—  
As if from no pleasing experiment  
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful  
So long as the process was needful,—  
As if she had tried in a crucible,  
To what 'speeches like gold' were reducible,  
And, finding the finest prove copper,  
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;  
To know what she had *not* to trust to,  
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.  
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;  
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,  
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?  
If she wished not the rash deed's recalculament?

'For I—so I spoke—'am a Poet:  
Human nature,—behoves that I know it!'

She told me, 'Too long had I heard  
Of the deed proved alone by the word:  
For my love—what De Lorge would not  
dare!

With my scorn—what De Lorge could  
compare!

And the endless descriptions of death  
He would brave when my lip formed a  
breath,

I must reckon as braved, or, of course,  
Doubt his word—and moreover, perforse,  
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,  
Must offer my love in return.

When I looked on your lion, it brought  
All the dangers at once to my thought,  
Encountered by all sorts of men,  
Before he was lodged in his den,—  
From the poor slave whose club or bare  
hands

Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,  
With no King and no Court to applaud,  
By no shame, should he shrink, over-awed,

Yet to capture the creature made shift,  
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,  
—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence

Of the pit, on no greater pretence  
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,  
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.  
So, wiser I judged it to make  
One trial what "death for my sake"  
Really meant, while the power was yet mine,

Than to wait until time should define  
Such a phrase not so simply as I,  
Who took it to mean just "to die."  
The blow a glove gives is but weak:  
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek?  
But when the heart suffers a blow,  
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?'

I looked, as away she was sweeping,  
And saw a youth eagerly keeping  
As close as he dared to the doorway;  
No doubt that a noble should more weigh  
His life than befits a plebeian;  
And yet, had our brute been Nemean—  
(I judge by a certain calm fervour  
The youth stepped with, forward to serve  
her)

—He'd have scarce thought you did him  
the worst turn

If you whispered 'Friend, what you'd get,  
first earn!'

And when, shortly after, she carried  
Her shame from the Court, and they mar-  
ried,

To that marriage some happiness, maugre  
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

For De Lorge, he made women with men  
vie,

Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;  
And in short stood so plain a head taller  
That he wooed and won . . . how do you  
call her?

The Beauty, that rose in the sequel  
To the King's love, who loved her a week  
well.

And 'twas noticed he never would honour  
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)  
With the easy commission of stretching  
His legs in the service, and fetching  
His wife, from her chamber, those straying  
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,  
While the King took the closet to chat in,—  
But of course this adventure came pat in.  
And never the King told the story,  
How bringing a glove brought such glory,  
But the wife smiled—'His nerves are  
grown firmer:

Mine he brings now and utters no mur-  
mur!'

*Venienti occurrite morbo!*  
With which moral I drop my theorbo.

## TIME'S REVENGES

[1845.]

I've a Friend, over the sea;  
 I like him, but he loves me.  
 It all grew out of the books I write;  
 They find such favour in his sight  
 That he slaughters you with savage looks  
 Because you don't admire my books:  
 He does himself though,—and if some vein  
 Were to snap to-night in this heavy brain,  
 To-morrow month, if I lived to try,  
 Round should I just turn quietly,  
 Or out of the bedclothes stretch my hand  
 Till I found him, come from his foreign  
 land,

To be my nurse in this poor place,  
 And make my broth and wash my face  
 And light my fire, and, all the while,  
 Bear with his old good-humoured smile  
 That I told him 'Better have kept away  
 Than come and kill me, night and day,  
 With, worse than fever's throbs and shoots,  
 The creaking of his clumsy boots.'  
 I am as sure that this he would do,  
 As that Saint Paul's is striking Two.  
 And I think I had rather . . . woe is me!  
 — Yes, rather see him than not see,  
 If lifting a hand would seat him there  
 Before me in the empty chair  
 To-night, when my head aches indeed,  
 And I can neither think nor read  
 Nor make these purple fingers hold  
 The pen; this garret's freezing cold!

And I've a Lady — there he wakes,  
 The laughing fiend and prince of snakes  
 Within me, at her name, to pray  
 Fate send some creature in the way  
 Of my love for her, to be down-torn,  
 Upthrust and outward-borne,  
 So I might prove myself that sea  
 Of passion which I needs must be!  
 Call my thoughts false and my fancies  
 quaint  
 And my style infirm and its figures faint,  
 All the critics say, and more blame yet,  
 And not one angry word you get!  
 But, please you, wonder I would put  
 My cheek beneath that Lady's foot  
 Rather than trample under mine  
 The laurels of the Florentine,  
 And you shall see how the Devil spends  
 A fire God gave for other ends!  
 I tell you, I stride up and down  
 This garret, crowned with love's best  
 crown,  
 And feasted with love's perfect feast,  
 To think I kill for her, at least,  
 Body and soul and peace and fame,  
 Alike youth's end and manhood's aim,  
 — So is my spirit, as flesh with sin,  
 Filled full, eaten out and in

With the face of her, the eyes of her,  
 The lips, the little chin, the stir  
 Of shadow round her mouth; and she  
 — I'll tell you, — calmly would decree  
 That I should roast at a slow fire,  
 If that would compass her desire  
 And make her one whom they invite  
 To the famous ball to-morrow night.

There may be Heaven; there must be Hell;  
 Meantime, there is our Earth here — well!

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

[1845.]

THAT second time they hunted me  
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
 And Austria, hounding far and wide  
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,—  
 I made six days a hiding-place  
 Of that dry green old aqueduct  
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have  
 plucked  
 The fire-flies from the roof above,  
 Bright creeping through the moss they love.  
 — How long it seems since Charles was  
 lost!

Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
 The country in my very sight;  
 And when that peril ceased at night,  
 The sky broke out in red dismay  
 With signal-fires; well, there I lay  
 Close covered o'er in my recess,  
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
 Thinking on Metternich our friend,  
 And Charles's miserable end,  
 And much beside, two days; the third,  
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
 The peasants from the village go  
 To work among the maize; you know,  
 With us in Lombardy, they bring  
 Provisions packed on mules, a string  
 With little bells that cheer their task,  
 And casks, and boughs on every cask  
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;  
 These I let pass in jingling line,  
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
 The peasants from the village, too;  
 For at the very rear would troop  
 Their wives and sisters in a group  
 To help, I knew; when these had passed,  
 I threw my glove to strike the last,  
 Taking the chance: she did not start,  
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart  
 One instant, rapidly glanced round,  
 And saw me beckon from the ground:  
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;  
 She picked my glove up while she stripped  
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
 With that; my glove lay in her breast:  
 Then I drew breath: they disappeared:  
 It was for Italy I feared!

An hour, and she returned alone  
exactly where my glove was thrown.  
Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me  
rested the hopes of Italy;  
had devised a certain tale  
Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
persuade a peasant of its truth:  
meant to call a freak of youth  
his hiding, and give hopes of pay,  
and no temptation to betray.  
But when I saw that woman's face,  
its calm simplicity of grace,  
our Italy's own attitude  
in which she walked thus far, and stood,  
planting each naked foot so firm,  
to crush the snake and spare the worm—  
At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
am that man upon whose head  
they fix the price, because I hate  
the Austrians over us: the State  
Will give you gold—oh, gold so much,  
if you betray me to their clutch,  
and be your death, for aught I know,  
once they find you saved their foe.  
Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
and also paper, pen and ink,  
and carry safe what I shall write  
To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
before the Duomo shuts; go in,  
and wait till Tenebrae begin;  
Walk to the Third Confessional,  
between the pillar and the wall,  
and kneeling whisper, *Whence comes  
peace?*  
Say it a second time, then cease;  
and if the voice inside returns,  
*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns  
the cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip  
my letter where you placed your lip;  
Then come back happy we have done  
Our mother service—I, the son,  
as you the daughter of our land!

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
in the same place, with the same eyes:  
was no surer of sun-rise  
Than of her coming: we conferred  
Of her own prospects, and I heard  
She had a lover—stout and tall,  
He said—then let her eyelids fall,  
He could do much’—as if some doubt  
Entered her heart,—then, passing out,  
She could not speak for others, who  
Had other thoughts; herself she knew:  
And so she brought me drink and food.  
After four days, the scouts pursued  
Another path; at last arrived  
The help my Paduan friends contrived  
To furnish me: she brought the news.  
For the first time I could not choose

But kiss her hand, and lay my own  
Upon her head—This faith was shown  
To Italy, our mother; she  
Uses my hand and blesses thee!  
She followed down to the sea-shore;  
I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought  
Concerning—much less wished for—aught  
Beside the good of Italy,  
For which I live and mean to die!  
I never was in love; and since  
Charles proved false, nothing could convince  
My innocent heart I had a friend.  
However, if it pleased to spend  
Real wishes on myself—say, three—  
I know at least what one should be;  
I would grasp Metternich until  
I felt his red wet throat distil  
In blood thro’ these two hands: and next,  
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
Charles, perfidious traitor, for his part,  
Should die slow of a broken heart  
Under his new employers: last  
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast  
Do I grow old and out of strength.  
If I resolved to seek at length  
My father’s house again, how scared  
They all would look, and unprepared!  
My brothers live in Austria’s pay  
—Disowned me long ago, men say;  
And all my early mates who used  
To praise me so—perhaps induced  
More than one early step of mine—  
Are turning wise; while some opine  
‘Freedom grows License,’ some suspect  
‘Haste breeds Delay,’ and recollect  
They always said, such premature  
Beginnings never could endure!  
So, with a sullen ‘All’s for best,’  
The land seems settling to its rest.  
I think, then, I should wish to stand  
This evening in that dear, lost land,  
Over the sea the thousand miles,  
And know if yet that woman smiles  
With the calm smile; some little farm  
She lives in there, no doubt; what harm  
If I sat on the door-side bench,  
And, while her spindle made a trench  
Fantastically in the dust,  
Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
Her children’s ages and their names,  
And what may be the husband’s aims  
For each of them. I’d talk this out,  
And sit there, for an hour about,  
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
Mine on her head, and go my way.

So much for idle wishing—how  
It steals the time! To business now!

## IN A GONDOLA

[1842.]

*He sings*

I SEND my heart up to thee, all my heart  
 In this my singing.  
 For the stars help me, and the sea bears  
 part;  
 The very night is clinging  
 Closer to Venice' streets to leave one space  
 Above me, whence thy face  
 May light my joyous heart to thee its  
 dwelling-place.

*She speaks*

Say after me, and try to say  
 My very words, as if each word  
 Came from you of your own accord,  
 In your own voice, in your own way:  
 'This woman's heart and soul and brain  
 Are mine as much as this gold chain  
 She bids me wear; which' (say again)  
 I choose to make by cherishing  
 A precious thing, or choose to fling  
 Over the boat-side, ring by ring.  
 And yet once more say . . . no word  
 more!  
 Since words are only words. Give o'er!  
 Unless you call me, all the same,  
 Familiarly by my pet-name  
 Which, if the Three should hear you call,  
 And me reply to, would proclaim  
 At once our secret to them all.  
 Ask of me, too, command me, blame—  
 Do, break down the partition-wall  
 'Twixt us, the daylight world beholds  
 Curtained in dusk and splendid folds.  
 What's left but—all of me to take?  
 I am the Three's: prevent them, slake  
 Your thirst! 'Tis said, the Arab sage  
 In practising with gems can loose  
 Their subtle spirit in his cruce  
 And leave but ashes: so, 'sweet mage,  
 Leave them my ashes when thy use  
 Sucks out my soul, thy heritage!

*He sings*

## I

Past we glide, and past, and past!  
 What's that poor Agnese doing  
 Where they make the shutters fast?  
 Grey Zanobi's just a-wooing  
 To his couch the purchased bride:  
 Past we glide!

## II

Past we glide, and past, and past!  
 Why's the Pucci Palace flaring  
 Like a beacon to the blast?  
 Guests by hundreds, not one caring  
 If the dear host's neck were wried:  
 Past we glide!

*She sings*

## I

The Moth's kiss, first!  
 Kiss me as if you made believe  
 You were not sure, this eve,  
 How my face, your flower, had pursed  
 Its petals up; so, here and there  
 You brush it, till I grow aware  
 Who wants me, and wide open burst.

## II

The Bee's kiss, now!  
 Kiss me as if you entered gay  
 My heart at some noonday,  
 A bud that dares not disallow  
 The claim, so all is rendered up,  
 And passively its shattered cup  
 Over your head to sleep I bow.

*He sings*

## I

What are we two?  
 I am a Jew,  
 And carry thee, farther than friends can  
 pursue,  
 To a feast of our tribe;  
 Where they need thee to bribe  
 The devil that blasts them unless he imbibe  
 Thy . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And  
 now,  
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou!

## II

Say again, what we are?  
 The sprite of a star,  
 I lure thee above where the destinies bar  
 My plumes their full play  
 Till a ruddier ray  
 Than my pale one announce there is wither-  
 ing away  
 Some . . . Scatter the vision for ever! And  
 now,  
 As of old, I am I, Thou art Thou!

*He muses*

Oh, which were best, to roam or rest?  
 The land's lap or the water's breast?  
 To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
 Or swim in lucid shallows, just  
 Eluding water-lily leaves,  
 An inch from Death's black fingers, thru  
 To lock you, whom release he must;  
 Which life were best on Summer eves?

*He speaks, musing*

Lie back; could thought of mine improve  
 you?  
 From this shoulder let there spring  
 A wing; from this, another wing;  
 Wings, not legs and feet, shall move you!

Snow-white must they spring, to blend  
With your flesh, but I intend  
They shall deepen to the end,  
Broader, into burning gold,  
Till both wings crescent-wise enfold  
Your perfect self, from 'neath your feet  
To o'er your head, where, lo, they meet  
As if a million sword-blades hurled  
Defiance from you to the world!

Rescue me Thou, the only real!  
And scare away this mad Ideal  
That came, nor motions to depart!  
Thanks! Now, stay ever'as thou art!

*Still he muses*

I

What if the Three should catch at last  
Thy serenader? While there's ast  
Paul's cloak about my head, and fast  
Gian pinions me, Himself has passed  
His stylet thro' my back; I reel;  
And . . . is it Thou I feel?

II

They trail me, these three godless knaves,  
Past every church that saints and saves,  
Nor stop till, where the cold sea raves  
By Lido's wet accursed graves,  
They scoop mine, roll me to its brink,  
And . . . on Thy breast I sink!

*She replies, musing*

Dip your arm o'er the boat-side, elbow-deep,  
As I do: thus: were death so unlike sleep,  
Caught this way? Death's to fear from  
flame, or steel,  
Or poison doubtless; but from water —  
feel!  
Go find the bottom! Would you stay me?  
There!  
Now pluck a great blade of that ribbon-grass  
To plait in where the foolish jewel was,  
I flung away: since you have praised my  
hair,  
'Tis proper to be choice in what I wear.

*He speaks*

Row home? must we row home? Too  
surely  
Know I where its front's demurely  
Over the Giudecca piled;  
Window just with window mating,  
Door on door exactly waiting,  
All's the set face of a child:  
But behind it, where's a trace  
Of the staidness and reserve,  
And formal lines without a curve,  
In the same child's playing-face?  
No two windows look one way  
O'er the small sea-water thread

Below them. Ah, the autumn day  
I, passing, saw you overhead!  
First, out a cloud of curtain blew,  
Then, a sweet cry, and last, came you —  
To catch your lory that must needs  
Escape just then, of all times then,  
To peck a tall plant's fleecy seeds,  
And make me happiest of men.  
I scarce could breathe to see you reach  
So far back o'er the balcony  
To catch him ere he climbed too high  
Above you in the Smyrna peach  
That quick the round smooth cord of go'd.  
This coiled hair on your head, unrolled,  
Fell down you like a gorgeous snake  
The Roman girls were wont, of old,  
When Rome there was, for coolness' sake  
To let lie curling o'er their bosoms.  
Dear lory, may his beak retain  
Ever its delicate rose stain  
As if the wounded lotus-blossoms  
Had marked their thief to know again!

Stay longer yet, for others' sake  
Than mine! what should your chamber do?  
— With all its rarities that 'ache  
In silence while day lasts, but wake  
At night-time and their life renew,  
Suspended just to pleasure you  
That brought against their will together  
These objects, and, while days lasts, weave  
Around them such a magic tether  
That they look dumb: your harp, believe,  
With all the sensitive tight strings  
That dare not speak, now to itself  
Breathe slumberously as if some elf  
Went in and out the chords, his wings  
Make murmur wheresoe'er they graze,  
As an angel may, between the maze  
Of midnight palace-pillars, on  
And on, to sow God's plagues have gone  
Through guilty glorious Babylon.  
And while such murmurs flow, the nymph  
Bends o'er the harp-top from her shell  
As the dry limpet for the lymph  
Come with a tune he knows so well.  
And how your statues' hearts must swell!  
And how your pictures must descend  
To see each other, friend with friend!  
Oh, could you take them by surprise,  
You'd find Schidone's eager Duke  
Doing the quaintest courtesies  
To that prim Saint by Haste-thee-Luke!  
And, deeper into her rock den,  
Bold Castelfranco's Magdalen  
You'd find retreated from the ken  
Of that robed counsel-keeping Ser —  
As if the Tizian thinks of her,  
And is not, rather, gravely bent  
On seeing for himself what toys  
Are these, his progeny invent,  
What litter now the board employs  
Whereon he signed a document

That got him murdered! Each enjoys  
Its night so well, you cannot break  
The sport up, so, indeed must make  
More stay with me, for others' sake.

*She speaks*

I

To-morrow, if a harp-string, say,  
Is used to tie the jasmine back  
That overflows my room with sweets,  
Contrive your Zorzi somehow meets  
My Zanze: if the ribbon's black,  
The Three are watching; keep away.

II

Your gondola—let Zorzi wreath  
A mesh of water-weeds about  
Its prow, as if he unaware  
Had struck some quay or bridge-foot stair;  
That I may throw a paper out  
As you and he go underneath.

There 's Zanze's vigilant taper; safe are  
we!  
Only one minute more to-night with me?  
Resume your past self of a month ago!  
Be you the bashful gallant, I will be  
The lady with the colder breast than snow:  
Now bow you, as becomes, nor touch my  
hand  
More than I touch yours when I step to  
land,  
And say, 'All thanks, Siora!'—

Heart to heart,  
And lips to lips! Yet once more, ere we  
part,  
Clasp me, and make me thine, as mine  
thou art!

*He is surprised, and stabbed*  
It was ordained to be so, Sweet,—and  
best  
Comes now, beneath thine eyes, and on  
thy breast.  
Still kiss me! Care not for the cowards!  
Care  
Only to put aside thy beauteous hair  
My blood will hurt! The Three, I do not  
scorn  
To death, because they never lived: but I  
Have lived indeed, and so—(yet one more  
kiss)—can die!

#### THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

[1855.]

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,  
Since now at length my fate I know,  
Since nothing all my love avails,  
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,  
Since this was written and needs must  
be—

My whole heart rises up to bless  
Your name in pride and thankfulness!  
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only the memory of the same,  
—And this beside, if you will not blame,  
Your leave for one more last ride with  
me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two

With life or death in the balance: right!  
The blood replenished me again;  
My last thought was at least not vain:  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride,  
So one day more am I deified—

Who knows but the world may end to  
night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud  
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
By many benedictions—sun's  
And moon's and evening-star's at once—

And so, you, looking and loving best,  
Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,  
Down on you, near and yet more near,  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—  
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and  
fear!

Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smoothed itself out—a long-cramped scroll  
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.  
Past hopes already lay behind.

What need to strive with a life awry?  
Had I said that, had I done this,  
So might I gain, so might I miss.  
Might she have loved me? just as well  
She might have hated,—who can tell?  
Where had I been now if the worst befell?

And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?  
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?  
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,  
Saw other regions, cities new,

As the world rushed by on either side.  
I thought,—All labour, yet no less  
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
Look at the end of work, contrast  
The petty Done, the Undone vast,  
This Present of theirs with the hopeful  
Past!

I hoped she would love me: here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?  
What heart alike conceived and dared?  
What act proved all its thought had been?  
What will but felt the fleshly screen?

We ride and I see her bosom heave.  
There's many a crown for who can reach.  
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!

The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
A soldier's doing! what atones?  
They scratch his name on the Abbey-  
stones

My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? well,  
Your brains beat into rhythm — you tell  
What we felt only; you expressed  
You hold things beautiful the best,

And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.  
'Tis something, nay 'tis much — but then,  
Have you yourself what's best for men?  
Are you — poor, sick, old ere your time —  
Nearer one whit your own sublime  
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?

Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor — so, you gave  
A score of years to Art, her slave,  
And that's your Venus — whence we turn  
To yonder girl that fords the burn!

You acquiesce, and shall I repine?  
What, man of music, you, grown grey  
With notes and nothing else to say,  
Is this your sole praise from a friend,  
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
But in music we know how fashions end!'

I gave my youth — but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate  
Proposed bliss here should sublime  
My being; had I signed the bond —  
Still one must lead some life beyond,

— Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.  
This foot once planted on the goal,  
This glory-garland round my soul,  
Could I descry such? Try and test!  
I sink back shuddering from the quest —  
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem  
best?

Now, Heaven and she are beyond this  
ride.

And yet — she has not spoke so long!  
What if Heaven be that, fair and strong  
At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
Whither life's flower is first discerned,

We, fixed so, ever should so abide?  
What if we still ride on, we two,  
With life for ever old yet new,  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity, —  
And Heaven just prove that I and she

Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

### THE FLIGHT OF THE DUCHESS.

[1845.]

#### I

YOU'RE my friend:  
I was the man the Duke spoke to;  
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke,  
too;  
So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,  
My friend!

#### II

Ours is a great wild country:  
If you climb to our castle's top,  
I don't see where your eye can stop;  
For when you've passed the corn-field  
country,  
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are  
packed,  
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,  
And cattle-tract to open-chase,  
And open-chase to the very base  
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,  
Round about, solemn and slow,  
One by one, row after row,  
Up and up the pine-trees go,  
So, like black priests up, and so  
Down the other side again  
To another greater, wilder country,  
That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,  
Branched through and through with many  
a vein  
Whence iron 's dug, and copper 's dealt;  
Look right, look left, look straight before,—  
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,  
Copper-ore and iron-ore,  
And forge and furnace mould and melt,  
And so on, more and ever more,  
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,  
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-  
shore,  
— And the whole is our Duke's country!

#### III

I was born the day this present Duke was—  
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)  
In the castle where the other Duke was—  
(When I was happy and young, not old!)  
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower:  
We are of like age to an hour.  
My father was Huntsman in that day;  
Who has not heard my father say  
That, when a boar was brought to bay,  
Three times, four times out of five,  
With his huntspear he'd contrive  
To get the killing-place transfix'd,  
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?  
And that 's why the old Duke would rather  
He lost a salt-pit than my father,  
And loved to have him ever in call;  
That 's why my father stood in the hall  
When the old Duke brought his infant out  
To show the people, and while they passed  
The wondrous bantling round about,  
Was first to start at the outside blast  
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,  
Just a month after the babe was born.  
'And,' quoth the Kaiser's courier, 'since  
The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince  
Needs the Duke's self at his side.'  
The Duke looked down and seemed to  
wince,  
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide.

Castles a-fire, men on their march,  
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;  
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed  
The row of crests and shields and banners,  
Of all achievements after all manners,  
And 'aye,' said the Duke with a surly pride.  
The more was his comfort when he died  
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,  
With a gilt glove on his hand, his foot  
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,  
Petticoated like a herald,  
In a chamber next to an ante-room,  
Where he breathed the breath of page and  
groom,

What he called stink, and they, perfume:  
— They should have set him on red Berold,  
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!  
They should have got his cheek fresh tannedage

Such a day as to-day in the merry sun-shine!

Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot  
merlin!

(Hark, the wind 's on the heath at its  
game!

Oh for a noble falcon-lanner  
To flap each broad wing like a banner,  
And turn in the wind, and dance like  
flame!)

Had they broached a white-beer cask from  
Berlin!

— Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine  
Put to his lips, when they saw him pine,  
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,  
Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,  
And racy with sweet,— we shall not quar-rele.

#### IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess  
Was left with the infant in her clutches,  
She being the daughter of God knows who:  
And now was the time to revisit her tribe,  
So, abroad and afar they went, the two,  
And let our people rail and gibe  
At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,  
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,  
Till after long years we had our desire,  
And back came the Duke and his mother  
again.

#### V

And he came back the pertest little ape  
That ever affronted human shape;  
Full of his travel, struck at himself.  
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways?  
— Not he! For in Paris they told the elf  
That our rough North land was the Land  
of Lays,

The one good thing left in evil days;  
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,  
And only in wild nooks like ours  
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,  
And see true castles, with proper towers,

Young-hearted women, old-minded men,  
And manners now as manners were then.  
So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,  
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;  
'Twas not for the joy's self, but the joy of  
his showing it,  
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of  
our seeing it,  
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,  
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts  
of them torn-out:  
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,  
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,  
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;  
— They should have set him on red Berold,  
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,  
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

#### VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we  
heard:

And out of a convent, at the word,  
Came the Lady, in time of spring.

— Oh, old thoughts they cling, they clin  
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths  
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes  
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle  
In winter-time when you need to muffle.  
But the Duke had a mind we should cut a  
figure,

And so we saw the Lady arrive:  
My friend, I have seen a white crane bigger!

She was the smallest lady alive,  
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,  
Too small, almost, for the life and gladness  
That over-filled her, as some hive  
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees  
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:  
In truth, she was not hard to please!  
Up she looked, down she looked, round at  
the mead,

Straight at the castle, that's best indeed  
To look at from outside the walls:  
As for us, styled the 'serfs and thralls,'  
She as much thanked me as if she had said  
it,

(With her eyes, do you understand?)  
Because I patted her horse while I led it;  
And Max, who rode on her other hand,  
Said, no bird flew past but she inquired  
What its true name was, nor ever seemed  
tired—

If that was an eagle she saw hover,  
And the green and grey bird on the field  
was the plover.

When suddenly appeared the Duke:  
And as down she sprung, the small foot  
pointed

On to my hand,— as with a rebuke,  
And as if his backbone were not jointed,

The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,  
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;  
And, mind you, his mother all the while  
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'-ward;

And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys  
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;  
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,  
The Lady's face stopped its play,  
As if her first hair had grown grey—  
For such things must begin some one day!

## VII

In a day or two she was well again;  
As who should say, 'You labour in vain!  
This is all a jest against God, who meant  
I should ever be, as I am, content  
And glad in His sight; therefore, glad I  
will be'  
So, smiling as at first went she.

## VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire—  
Could not rest, could not tire—  
To a stone she might have given life!  
(I myself loved once, in my day)  
—For a shepherd's, miner's, huntsman's  
wife,  
(I had a wife, I know what I say)  
Never in all the world such an one!  
And here was plenty to be done,  
And she that could do it, great or small,  
She was to do nothing at all.  
There was already this man in his post,  
This in his station, and that in his office,  
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at  
most,

To meet his eye, with the other trophies,  
Now outside the Hall, now in it,  
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,  
At the proper place in the proper minute,  
And die away the life between.  
And it was amusing enough, each infrac-  
tion  
Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)  
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction  
With which the young Duke and the old  
Dame

Would let her advise, and criticize,  
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,  
And, childlike, parcel out praise or blame:  
They bore it all in complacent guise,  
As though an artificer, after contriving  
A wheel-work image as if it were living,  
Should find with delight it could motion  
to strike him!

So found the Duke, and his mother like  
him:  
The Lady hardly got a rebuff—  
That had not been contemptuous enough,  
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded ap-  
plause,  
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

## IX

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,  
Paling and ever paling,  
As the way is with a hid chagrin;  
And the Duke perceived that she was  
ailing,  
And said in his heart, "Tis done to spite  
me,  
But I shall find in my power to right me!"  
Don't swear, friend—the old one, many  
a year,  
Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you  
shall hear.

## X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-  
warning,  
When the stag had to break with his foot,  
of a morning,  
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice,  
That covered the pond till the sun, in a  
trice,  
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,  
And another and another, and faster and  
faster,  
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water  
rolled:  
Then it so chanced that the Duke our  
master  
Asked himself what were the pleasures in  
season.  
And found, since the calendar bade him  
be hearty,  
He should do the Middle Age no treason  
In resolving on a hunting-party.  
Always provided, old books showed the  
way of it!  
What meant old poets by their strictures?  
And when old poets had said their say of  
it,  
How taught old painters in their pictures?  
We must revert to the proper channels,  
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,  
And gather up woodcraft's authentic tra-  
ditions:  
Here was food for our various ambitions,  
As on each case, exactly stated,  
—To encourage your dog, now, the prop-  
erlest chirrup,  
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting  
your stirrup—  
We of the household took thought and  
debated.  
Blessed was he whose back ached with the  
jerkin  
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;  
Blesseder he who nobly sunk 'ohs'  
And 'ahs' while he tugged on his grand-  
sire's trunk-hose;  
What signified hats if they had no rims on,  
Each slouching before and behind like the  
scallop,  
And able to serve at sea for a shallow,

Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?  
So that the deer now to make a short rhyme on't,  
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,  
Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,  
And oh, the Duke's tailor — he had a hot time on't!

## XI

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness  
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,  
The Duke put this question, 'The Duke's part provided,  
Had not the Duchess some share in the business?'  
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses  
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:  
And, after much laying of heads together,  
Somebody's cap got a notable feather  
By the announcement with proper unction  
That he had discovered the lady's function;  
Since ancient authors gave this tenet,  
'When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,  
Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,  
And, with water to wash the hands of her liege  
In a clean ewer with a fair toweling,  
Let her preside at the disemboweling.'  
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion  
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,  
And thrust her broad wings like a banner  
Into a coop for vulgar pigeon;  
And if day by day, and week by week,  
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,  
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,  
Would it cause you any great surprise  
If, when you decided to give her an airing,  
You found she needed a little preparing?  
— I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,  
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?  
Yet when the Duke to his lady signified,  
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,  
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—  
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,  
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,  
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,  
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,  
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,  
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,  
And much wrong now that used to be right,

So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—  
Was conduct ever more affronting?  
With all the ceremony settled —  
With the towel ready, and the sewer  
Polishing up his oldest ewer,  
And the jennet pitched upon; a piebald,  
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eyeballed,—  
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!  
And when she persisted nevertheless, —  
Well, I suppose here's the time to confess  
That there ran half round our Lady's chamber  
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;  
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,  
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?  
And since Jacynth was like a June rose,  
why, a fervent  
Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant;  
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,  
How could I keep at any vast distance?  
And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,  
The Duke, dumb stricken with amazement,  
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,  
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,  
Turned her over to his yellow mother  
To learn what was held decorous and lawful;  
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-like instinct,  
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its quince-tinct.  
Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth at once!  
What meant she? — Who was she? — Her duty and station,  
The wisdom of age and the folly of youth, at once,  
Its decent regard and its fitting relation —  
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in hell free  
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,  
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,  
And then you may guess how that tongue of hers ran on!  
Well, somehow or other it ended at last  
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;  
And after her, — making (he hoped) a face  
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,  
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere grace  
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,  
From door to staircase — oh, such a solemn  
Unbending of the vertebral column!

## XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered;  
And here was the huntsman bidding un-kennel,

And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,  
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;  
For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog

You might have cut as an axe chops a log.  
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;

And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,  
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily.

And a sinking at the lower abdomen  
Begins the day with indifferent omen.  
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,  
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder

This way and that from the valley under;  
And, looking through the court-yard arch,  
Down in the valley, what should meet him  
But a troop of Gipsies on their march,  
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

## XIII

Now, in your land, Gipsies reach you, only  
After reaching all lands beside;  
North they go, South they go, trooping or lonely,  
And still, as they travel far and wide,  
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,

That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there.

But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,

And nowhere else, I take it, are found  
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned;

Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on  
The very fruit they are meant to feed on.  
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,

The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,

Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,  
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—

Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle

With side-bars never a brute can baffle;  
Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within wards;

Or, if your colt's forefoot inclines to curve inwards,

Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn on a swivel

And won't allow the hoof to shrivel.

Then they cast bells like the shell of the winkle,

That keep a stout heart in the ram with their tinkle;

But the sand—they pinch and pound it like otters;  
Command me to Gipsy glass-makers and potters!

Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,  
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall appear,

As if in pure water you dropped and let die A bruised black-blooded mulberry;  
And that other sort, their crowning pride,  
With long white threads distinct inside,  
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which dangle

Loose such a length and never tangle,  
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear waters,  
And the cup-lily couches with all the white daughters:

Such are the works they put their hand to,  
The uses they turn and twist iron and sand to.

And these made the troop, which our Duke saw sally

Towards his castle from out of the valley,  
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,  
Come out with the morning to greet our riders.

And up they wound till they reached the ditch,

Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,  
That I knew, as she hobbled from the group,

By her gait, directly, and her stoop,  
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune  
To let that same witch tell us our fortune.  
The oldest Gipsy then above ground;  
And, sure as the autumn season came round,

She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,  
And every time, as she swore, for the last time.

And presently she was seen to sidle Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,  
So that the horse of a sudden reared up As under its nose the old witch peered up With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-holes Of no use now but to gather brine,  
And began a kind of level whine Such as they used to sing to their viols When their ditties they go grinding Up and down with nobody minding:  
And then, as of old, at the end of the humming

Her usual presents were forthcoming  
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,  
(Just a seashore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,) Or a porcelain mouthpiece to screw on a pipe-end,—

And so she awaited her annual stipend.  
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe

A word in reply; and in vain she felt  
With twitching fingers at her belt  
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,  
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch  
safe,—  
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,  
Or possibly with an after-intention,  
She was come, she said, to pay her duty  
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.  
No sooner had she named his Lady,  
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,  
And its smirk returned with a novel mean-  
ing—  
For it struck him, the babe just wanted  
weaning;  
If one gave her a taste of what life was  
and sorrow,  
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-  
morrow;  
And who so fit a teacher of trouble  
As this sordid crone bent wellnigh double?  
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,  
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute  
That their own fleece serves for natural  
fur-suit)  
He was contrasting, 'twas plain from his  
gesture,  
The life of the Lady so flower-like and  
delicate  
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.  
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned  
From out of the throng, and while I drew  
near  
He told the crone, as I since have reckoned  
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear  
With circumspection and mystery,  
The main of the Lady's history,  
Her frowardness and ingratitude;  
And for all the crone's submissive attitude  
I could see round her mouth the loose plaits  
tightening,  
And her brow with assenting intelligence  
brightening.  
As though she engaged with hearty good-  
will  
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfill,  
And promised the Lady a thorough fright-  
ening.  
And so, just giving her a glimpse  
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps  
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the  
hernshaw,  
He bade me take the Gipsy mother  
And set her telling some story or other  
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,  
To while away a weary hour  
For the Lady left alone in her bower,  
Whose mind and body craved exertion  
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

## XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere  
curveter,  
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo

Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and  
servitor,  
And back I turned and bade the crone fol-  
low.  
And what makes me confident what 's to  
be told you  
Had all along been of this crone's devising,  
Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold  
you,  
There was a novelty quick as surprising:  
For first, she had shot up a full head in  
stature,  
And her step kept pace with mine nor  
faltered,  
As if age had foregone its usurpature,  
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,  
And the face looked quite of another nature,  
And the change reached too, whatever the  
change meant,  
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement:  
For where its tatters hung loose like sedges,  
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,  
Like the band-roll strung with tomans  
Which proves the veil a Persian wom-  
an's:  
And under her brow, like a snail's horns  
newly  
Come out as after the rain he paces,  
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly  
Live and aware looked out of their places,  
So, we went and found Jacynth at the entry  
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry;  
I told the command and produced my com-  
panion,  
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,  
For since last night, by the same token,  
Not a single word had the Lady spoken:  
They went in both to the presence together,  
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

xv

And now, what took place at the very first  
of all,  
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:  
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall  
On that little head of hers and burn it,  
If she knew how she came to drop so  
soundly  
Asleep of a sudden and there continue  
The whole time sleeping as profoundly  
As one of the boars my father would pin  
you  
'Twixt the eyes where the life holds gar-  
rison,  
— Jacynth forgive me the comparison!  
But where I begin my own narration  
Is a little after I took my station  
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,  
And, having in those days a falcon eye,  
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,  
From where the bushes thinlier crested  
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one  
tree.  
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested

By — was it singing, or was it saying,  
Or a strange musical instrument playing  
In the chamber? — and to be certain  
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,  
And there lay Jacynth asleep,  
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,  
In a rosy sleep along the floor  
With her head against the door;  
While in the midst, on the seat of state,  
Was a queen — the Gipsy woman late,  
With head and face downbent  
On the Lady's head and face intent:  
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,  
The Lady sat between her knees  
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands  
met,

And on those hands her chin was set,  
And her upturned face met the face of the  
crone

Wherein the eyes had grown and grown  
As if she could double and quadruple  
At pleasure the play of either pupil  
— Very like, by her hands' slow fanning,  
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers.  
They moved to measure, or bell-clappers.  
I said, 'Is it blessing, is it banning,  
Do they applaud you or burlesque you —  
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?'  
But, just as I thought to spring in to the  
rescue,

At once I was stopped by the Lady's ex-  
pression:

For it was life her eyes were drinking  
From the crone's wide pair above unwink-  
ing,

— Life's pure fire received without shrink-  
ing.

Into the heart and breast whose heaving  
Told you no single drop they were leaving,  
— Life, that filling her, passed redundant  
Into her very hair, back swerving  
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,  
As her head thrown back showed the  
white throat curving;

And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,  
Moving to the mystic measure,  
Bounding as the bosom bounded.

I stopped short, more and more con-  
founded,

As still her cheeks burned and eyes gis-  
tened,

As she listened and she listened:  
When all at once a hand detained me,  
The selfsame contagion gained me.  
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,  
Making out words and prose and rhyme,  
Till it seemed that the music furled  
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped;  
From under the words it first had propped.  
And left them midway in the world:  
Word took word as hand takes hand,  
I could hear at last, and understand,  
And when I held the unbroken thread,  
The Gipsy said: —

'And so at last we find my tribe,  
And so I set thee in the midst,  
And to one and all of them describe  
What thou saidst and what thou didst,  
Our long and terrible journey through,  
And all thou art ready to say and do  
In the trials that remain:  
I trace them the vein and the other vein  
That meet on thy brow and part again,  
Making our rapid mystic mark;  
And I bid my people prove and probe  
Each eye's profound and glorious globe  
Till they detect the kindred spark  
In those depths so dear and dark,  
Like the spots that snap and burst and flee,  
Circling over the midnight sea.  
And on that round young cheek of thine  
I make them recognize the tinge,  
As when of the costly scarlet wine  
They drip so much as will impinge  
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat  
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat  
Over a silver plate whose sheen  
Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.  
For so I prove thee, to one and all,  
Fit, when my people ope their breast,  
To see the sign, and hear the call,  
And take the vow, and stand the test  
Which adds one more child to the rest —  
When the breast is bare and the arms are  
wide,  
And the world is left outside.  
For there is probation to decree,  
And many and long must the trials be  
Thou shalt victoriously endure,  
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;  
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay  
Of the prize he dug from its mountain-  
tomb, —  
Let once the vindicating ray  
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,  
And steel and fire have done their part  
And the prize falls on its finder's heart;  
So, trial after trial past,  
Wilt thou fall at the very last  
Breathless, half in trance  
With the thrill of the great deliverance.  
Into our arms for evermore;  
And thou shalt know, those arms once  
curled  
About thee, what we knew before,  
How love is the only good in the world.  
Henceforth be loved as heart can love,  
Or brain devise, or hand approve!  
Stand up, look below,  
It is our life at thy feet we throw  
To step with into light and joy;  
Not a power of life but we'll employ  
To satisfy thy nature's want;  
Art thou the tree that props the plant,  
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree —  
Canst thou help us, must we help thee?

If any two creatures grew into one,  
They would do more than the world has  
done;  
Though each apart were never so weak,  
Ye vainly through the world should seek  
For the knowledge and the might  
Which in such union grew their right:  
So, to approach, at least, that end,  
And blend,—as much as may be, blend  
Thee with us or us with thee,  
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,  
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,  
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?  
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland-crown,  
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine  
cleaves,  
Die on thy boughs and disappear  
While not a leaf of thine is sere?  
Or is the other fate in store,  
And art thou fitted to adore,  
To give thy wondrous self away,  
And take a stronger nature's sway?  
I foresee and I could foretell  
Thy future portion, sure and well—  
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak  
true,  
Let them say what thou shalt do!  
Only, be 'sure thy daily life,  
In its peace, or in its strife,  
Never shall be unobserved;  
We pursue thy whole career,  
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—  
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,  
We are beside thee, in all thy ways,  
With our blame, with our praise,  
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,  
Glad, angry—but indifferent, no!  
Whether it is thy lot to go,  
For the good of us all, where the haters  
meet  
In the crowded city's horrible street;  
Or thou step alone through the morass  
Where never sound yet was  
Save the dry quick clasp of the stork's bill,  
For the air is still, and the water still,  
When the blue breast of the dipping coot  
Dives under, and all is mute.  
So at the last shall come old age,  
Decrepit as befits that stage:  
How else wouldest thou retire apart  
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,  
And gather all to the very least  
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,  
Let fall through eagerness to find  
The crowning dainties yet behind?  
Ponder on the entire Past  
Laid together thus at last,  
When the twilight helps to fuse  
The first fresh, with the faded hues,  
And the outline of the whole,  
As round eve's shades their framework roll,  
Grandly fronts for once thy soul.  
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam  
Of yet another morning breaks,

And like the hand which ends a dream,  
Death, with the might of his sunbeam  
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,  
Then—'  
Aye, then, indeed, something would happen!  
But what? For here her voice changed  
like a bird's;  
There grew more of the music and less of  
the words;  
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen  
To paper and put you down every syllable  
With those clever clerkly fingers,  
All that I've forgotten as well as what  
lingers  
In this old brain of mine that's but ill  
able  
To give you even this poor version  
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stam-  
mering  
—More fault of those who had the ham-  
mering  
Of prosody into me and syntax,  
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!  
But to return from this excursion,—  
Just, do you mark, when the song was  
sweetest,  
The peace most deep and the charm com-  
plettest,  
There came, shall I say, a snap—  
And the charm vanished!  
And my sense returned, so strangely ban-  
ished,  
And, starting as from a nap,  
I knew the crone was bewitching my lady  
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring  
made I,  
Down from the casement, round to the  
portal,  
Another minute and I had entered,—  
When the door opened, and more than  
mortal  
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred  
All beauties I ever saw or shall see,  
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by  
palsy.  
She was so different, happy and beautiful,  
I felt at once that all was best.  
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest.  
But wait her commands, obey and be duti-  
ful.  
Not that, in fact, there was any command-  
ing,  
—I saw the glory of her eye,  
And the brow's height and the breast's  
expanding,  
And I was hers to live or to die.  
As for finding what she wanted,  
You know God Almighty granted  
Such little signs should serve wild crea-  
tures

To tell one another all their desires,  
 So that each knows what his friend requires,  
 And does its bidding without teachers.  
 I preceded her; the crone  
 Followed silent and alone;  
 I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered  
 In the old style; both her eyes had slunk  
 Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;  
 In short, the soul in its body sunk  
 Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.  
 We descended, I preceding;  
 Crossed the court with nobody heeding;  
 All the world was at the chase,  
 The courtyard like a desert-place,  
 The stable emptied of its small fry;  
 I saddled myself the very palfrey  
 I remember patting while it carried her,  
 The day she arrived and the Duke married her.  
 And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving  
 Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing  
 The Lady had not forgotten it either,  
 And knew the poor devil so much beneath her  
 Would have been only too glad for her service  
 To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk  
 dervise,  
 But unable to pay proper duty where owing it  
 Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:  
 For though the moment I began setting  
 His saddle on my own nag of Berold's  
 begetting,  
 (Not that I meant to be obtrusive)  
 She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,  
 By a single rapid finger's lifting,  
 And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,  
 And a little shake of the head, refused me,—  
 I say, although she never used me,  
 Yet when she was mounted, the Gipsy behind her,  
 And I ventured to remind her,  
 I suppose with a voice of less steadiness  
 Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,  
 —Something to the effect that I was in readiness  
 Whenever God should please she needed me,—  
 Then, do you know, her face looked down on me  
 With a look that placed a crown on me,  
 And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom—  
 And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,  
 Dropped me . . . ah, had it been a purse  
 Of silver, my friend, or gold that's worse,

Why, you see, as soon as I found myself So understood,—that a true heart so may gain  
 Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,  
 Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!  
 It was a little plait of hair Such as friends in a convent make To wear, each for the other's sake,— This, see, which at my breast I wear, Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgement), And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment. And then,—and then,—to cut short,— this is idle,  
 These are feelings it is not good to foster,— I pushed the gate wide, she shook the bridle, And the palfrey bounded,—and so we lost her.

xvi

When the liquor's out, why clink the cannakin?  
 I did think to describe you the panic in The redoubtable breast of our master the mannikin,  
 And what was the pitch of his mother's yellowness,  
 How she turned as a shark to snap the spare-rib  
 Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving Carib,  
 When she heard, what she called, the flight of the feloness  
 —But it seems such child's play,  
 What they said and did with the Lady away!  
 And to dance on, when we've lost the music,  
 Always made me—and no doubt makes you—sick.  
 Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked so stern  
 As that sweet form disappeared through the postern,  
 She that kept it in constant good humour, It ought to have stopped; there seemed nothing to do more.  
 But the world thought otherwise and went on,  
 And my head's one that its spite was spent on:  
 Thirty years are fled since that morning, And with them all my head's adornning.  
 Nor did the old Duchess die outright, As you expect, of suppressed spite,  
 The natural end of every adder  
 Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:  
 But she and her son agreed, I take it, That no one should touch on the story to wake it,

For the wound in the Duke's pride rankled  
fiery,  
So, they made no search and small inquiry—  
And when fresh Gipsies have paid us a visit, I've  
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,  
But told them they're folks the Duke don't want here,  
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.  
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,  
And the old one was in the young one's stead,  
And took, in her place, the household's head,  
And a blessed time the household had of it!  
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious  
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,  
I could favour you with sundry touches  
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess  
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness  
(To get on faster) until at last her Cheek grew to be one master-plaster  
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse:  
In short, she grew from scalp to udder  
Just the object to make you shudder.

## XVII

You're my friend—  
What a thing friendship is, world without end!  
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up  
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,  
And poured out, all lovelly, sparklingly, sunlit,  
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup, Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—  
Friendship may match with that monarch of fluids;  
Each supples a dry brain, fills you its ins-and-outs,  
Gives your life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts  
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees  
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease.  
I have seen my little Lady once more, Jacynth, the Gipsy, Berold, and the rest of it,  
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;  
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it:  
And now it is made—why, my heart's blood, that went trickle,

Trickle, but anon, in such muddy driblets, Is pumped up brisk now, through the main ventricle,  
And genially floats me about the giblets. I'll tell you what I intend to do:  
I must see this fellow his sad life through— He is our Duke, after all,  
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall. My father was born here, and I inherit His fame, a chain he bound his son with:  
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it, But there's no mine to blow up and get done with,  
So, I must stay till the end of the chapter. For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter, Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on, Some day or other, his head in a morion, And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,  
Slain by an onslaught fierce of hiccup. And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,  
And its leathern sheath lie o'ergrown with a blue crust, Then, I shall scrape together my earnings; For, you see, in the churchyard Jacynth reposes,  
And our children all went the way of the roses:  
It's a long lane that knows no turnings. One needs but little tackle to travel in; So, just one stout cloak shall I indue: And for a staff, what beats the javelin With which his boars my father pinned you?  
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently, Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful, I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly!  
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful. What's a man's age? He must hurry more, that's all;  
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold:  
When we mind labour, then only, we're too old—  
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?  
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees, (Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)  
I hope to get safely out of the turmoil And arrive one day at the land of the Gipsies,  
And find my Lady, or hear the last news of her From some old thief and son of Lucifer,  
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,  
Sunburned all over like an Aethiop.

And when my Cotnar begins to operate  
 And the tongue of the rogue to run at a  
 proper rate,  
 And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each  
 flaccid dent,  
 I shall drop in with—as if by accident—  
 'You never knew then, how it all ended.  
 What fortunes good or bad attended  
 The little Lady your Queen befriended?'  
 —And when that's told me, what's remaining?  
 This world's too hard for my explaining.  
 The same wise judge of matters equine  
 Who still preferred some slim four-year-old  
 To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,  
 And, for strong Cotnar, drank French weak  
 wine,  
 He also must be such a Lady's scowler!  
 Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau:  
 Now up, now down, the world's one  
 saw.  
 —So, I shall find out some snug corner  
 Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-knight,  
 Turn myself round and bid the world good  
 night;  
 And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's  
 blowing  
 Wakes me (unless priests cheat us laymen)  
 To a world where will be no further  
 throwing  
 Pearls before swine that can't value them.  
 Amen!

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

[1855.]

[*Time*—Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

LET US begin and carry up this corpse,  
 Singing together.  
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar  
 thorpes,  
 Each in its tether  
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,  
 Cared-for till cock-crow:  
 Look out if yonder be not day again  
 Rimming the rock-row!  
 That's the appropriate country; there,  
 man's thought,  
 Rarer, intenser,  
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
 Chafes in the censer!  
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and  
 crop;  
 Seek we sepulture  
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top,  
 Crowded with culture!

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;  
 Clouds overcome it;  
 No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
 Circling its summit!  
 Thither our path lies; wind we up the  
 heights:  
 Wait ye the warning?  
 Our low life was the level's and the night's;  
 He's for the morning!  
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each  
 head,  
 'Ware the beholders!  
 This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,  
 Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe  
 and croft,  
 Safe from the weather!  
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
 Singing together,  
 He was a man born with thy face and  
 throat,  
 Lyric Apollo!  
 Long he lived nameless: how should spring  
 take note  
 Winter would follow?  
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!  
 Cramped and diminished,  
 Moaned he, 'New measures, other feet  
 anon!'  
 My dance is finished?'  
 No, that's the world's way! (keep the  
 mountain-side,  
 Make for the city.)  
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with  
 pride  
 Over men's pity;  
 Left play for work, and grappled with the  
 world  
 Bent on escaping:  
 'What's in the scroll,' quoth he, 'thou  
 keepest furled?  
 Show me their shaping,  
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard  
 and sage,—  
 Give!'—So he gowned him,  
 Straight got by heart that book to its last  
 page:  
 Learned, we found him!  
 Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes  
 like lead,  
 Accents uncertain:  
 'Time to taste life,' another would have  
 said,  
 'Up with the curtain!'  
 This man said rather, 'Actual life comes  
 next?'  
 Patience a moment!  
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed  
 text,  
 Still, there's the comment.  
 Let me know all! Prate not of most or  
 least.  
 Painful or easy:

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,

Aye, nor feel queasy!

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
When he had learned it,  
When he had gathered all books had to give!

Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the parts —  
Fancy the fabric  
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire  
from quartz,  
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place  
Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace  
(Hearten our chorus)

That before living he'd learn how to live —  
No end to learning:  
Earn the means first — God surely will contrive

Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say — 'But time escapes!'

Live now or never?'

He said, 'What 's time? leave Now for dogs and apes!

Man has Forever.'

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:

*Calculus* racked him:

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:  
*Tussis* attacked him.

'Now, Master, take a little rest!' — not he!  
(Caution redoubled!)

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly)  
Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,  
Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydropic with a sacred thirst)  
Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,  
Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,  
(He loves the burthen) —

God's task to make the heavenly period  
Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear  
Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment!

He ventured neck or nothing — Heaven's success

Found, or earth's failure:

'Wilt thou trust death or not?' He answered 'Yes!'

Hence with life's pale lure!

That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit:

This high man, aiming at a million,  
Misses an unit.

That, has the world here — should he need the next,

Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed

Seeking shall find Him.

So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,

Ground he at grammar;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife:

While he could stammer

He settled *Hoti*'s business — let it be! — Properly based *Oun* —

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*, Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place:

Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
Swallows and curlews!

Here 's the top-peak! the multitude below Live, for they can, there.

This man decided not to Live but Know — Bury this man there?

Here — here 's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm,

Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,

Leave him — still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.

### THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY

#### A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE

ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE, *Virgilinus*. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A. D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of centuries.)

[1855.]

#### PREDAMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET

THE Lord, we look to once for all,  
Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:

He knows not to vary, saith Saint Paul,  
Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.  
See him no other than as he is!  
Give both the Infinitudes their due—  
Infinite mercy, but, I wis,  
As infinite a justice too.

[Organ: *plagal-cadence.*  
As infinite a justice too.]

## ONE SINGETH

John, Master of the Temple of God,  
Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,  
What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,  
He sold it to Sultan Saladin:  
Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing  
there,  
Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,  
And clift of his wings in Paris square,  
They bring him now to be burned alive.  
[And wanteth there grace of lute or  
clavicithern, ye shall say to confirm  
him who singeth—  
We bring John now to be burned alive.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built;  
'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck;  
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,  
Make a trench all round with the city  
muck;  
Inside they pile log upon log, good store;  
Faggots not few, blocks great and small,  
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no  
more,—  
For they mean he should roast in the  
sight of all.

## CHORUS

We mean he should roast in the sight of  
all.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith;  
Billets that blaze substantial and slow;  
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith;  
Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white  
glow:  
Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,  
Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,  
Spit in his face, then leap back safe,  
Sing 'Laudes' and bid clap-to the torch.

## CHORUS

*Laus Deo*—who bids clap-to the torch.

John of the Temple, whose fame so  
bragged,  
Is burning alive in Paris square!  
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged?  
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there?  
Or heave his chest, while a band goes  
round?  
Or threat with his fist, since his arms  
are spliced?

Or kick with his feet, now his legs are  
bound?  
—Thinks John, I will call upon Jesus  
Christ.  
[Here one crosseth himself.]

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,  
Jesus Christ—John had eaten and  
drunk;  
To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.  
(*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)  
Now it was, 'Saviour, bountiful lamb,  
I have roasted Thee Turks, though men  
roast me.  
See Thy servant, the plight wherein I am!  
Art Thou a Saviour? Save Thou me!'

## CHORUS

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save Thou  
me!

Who maketh God's menace an idle word?  
—Saith, it no more means what it pro-  
claims,  
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton  
bird?—  
For she too prattles of ugly names.  
—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what  
he knows?  
That God is good and the rest is breath;  
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's  
rose?  
Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

## CHORUS

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith!

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!  
Some; honied of taste like your leman's  
tongue:  
Some, bitter—for why? (roast gaily on!)  
Their tree struck root in devil's dung!  
When Paul once reasoned of righteousness  
And of temperance and of judgment to  
come,  
Good Felix trembled, he could no less—  
John, snickering, crook'd his wicked  
thumb.

## CHORUS

What cometh to John of the wicked  
thumb?

Ha, ha, John plucketh now at his rose  
To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!  
Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays unclose;  
Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;  
And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;  
And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;  
And lo, he is horribly in the toils  
Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

## CHORUS

What maketh Heaven, That maketh Hell.

So, as John called now, through the fire  
    amain,  
    On the Name, he had cursed with, all  
    his life —  
To the Person, he bought and sold again —  
    For the Face, with his daily buffets  
    rife —

Feature by feature It took its place!  
    And his voice, like a mad dog's choking  
    bark,  
At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face —  
    Died. Forth John's soul flared into the  
    dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET  
God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

### THE STATUE AND THE BUST

[1855.]

THERE'S a palace in Florence, the world  
    knows well,  
And a statue watches it from the square,  
    And this story of both do our townsmen  
    tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,  
At the farthest window facing the East  
Asked, 'Who rides by with the royal air?'  
The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;  
She leaned forth, one on either hand;  
They saw how the blush of the bride in-  
creased —

They felt by its beats her heart expand —  
As one at each ear and both in a breath  
Whispered, 'The Great-Duke Ferdinand.'

That selfsame instant, underneath,  
The Duke rode past in his idle way,  
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,  
Till he threw his head back — 'Who is she?'  
— 'A Bride the Riccardi brings home to-  
day.'

Hair in heaps lay heavily  
Over a pale brow spirit-pure —  
Carved like the heart of the coal-black  
tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure —  
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes  
Of the blackest black our eyes endure.

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise  
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man, —  
The Duke grew straightway brave and  
wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;  
She looked at him, as one who awakes, —  
The Past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,  
A feast was held that selfsame night  
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,  
But the Palace overshadows one,  
Because of a crime which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,  
Through the first republic's murder there  
By Cosimo and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the  
square)

Turned in the midst of his multitude  
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood  
A single minute and no more,  
While the bridegroom bent as a man sub-  
dued —

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor —  
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,  
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?  
If a word did pass, which I do not think,  
Only one out of the thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink  
He and his bride were alone at last  
In a bedchamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,  
That the door she had passed was shut on  
her  
Till the final catafalque repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,  
Through a certain window facing the East  
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a  
feast.  
And a feast might lead to so much beside,  
He, of many evils, chose the least.

'Freely I choose too,' said the bride —  
'Your window and its world suffice,'  
Replied the tongue, while the heart re-  
plied —

'If I spend the night with that devil twice,  
May his window serve as my loop of hell  
Whence a damned soul looks on Paradise!'

I fly to the Duke who loves me well,  
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow  
Ere I count another ave-bell.

'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,  
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim,  
And I save my soul — but not to-mor-  
row' —

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)—  
 'My father tarries to bless my state:  
 I must keep it one day more for him.

'Is one day more so long to wait?  
 Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;  
 We shall see each other, sure as fate.'

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!  
 So we resolve on a thing and sleep:  
 So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, 'Dear or cheap  
 As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove  
 To body or soul, I will drain it deep.'

And on the morrow, bold with love,  
 He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,  
 As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled 'Twas a very funeral,  
 Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—  
 A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

'What if we break from the Arno bowers,  
 And try if Petraja, cool and green,  
 Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?'

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen  
 On his steady brow and quiet mouth,  
 Said, 'Too much favour for me so mean!

'But, alas! my lady leaves the South;  
 Each wind that comes from the Apennine  
 Is a menace to her tender youth:

'Nor a way exists, the wise opine,  
 If she quits her palace twice this year,  
 To avert the flower of life's decline.'

Quoth the Duke, 'A sage and a kindly fear.  
 Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:  
 Be our feast to-night as usual here!'

And then to himself—'Which night shall bring  
 Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—  
 Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

'Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—  
 For to-night the Envoy arrives from France,  
 Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

'I need thee still and might miss perchance.  
 To-day is not wholly lost, beside,  
 With its hope of my lady's countenance:

'For I ride—what should I do but ride?  
 And passing her palace, if I list,  
 May glance at its window—well betide!'

So said, so done: nor the lady missed  
 One ray that broke from the ardent brow,  
 Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,  
 No morrow's sun should arise and set  
 And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,  
 With still fresh cause to wait one day more  
 Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,  
 With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,  
 They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,  
 But not in despite of heaven and earth—  
 The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth

By winter's fruits that supplant the rose:  
 The world and its ways have a certain worth!

And to press a point while these oppose  
 Were a simple policy; better wait:  
 We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,  
 Who daily may ride and pass and look  
 Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book

Holding one picture and only one,  
 Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book  
 was done,  
 And she turned from the picture at night  
 to scheme  
 Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years—gleam by gleam  
 The glory dropped from their youth and love,  
 And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above,—  
 But who can take a dream for a truth?  
 Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth  
 Depart, and the silver thread that streaked  
 Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked—  
 And wondered who the woman was,  
 Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass —  
 'Summon here,' she suddenly said,  
 'Before the rest of my old self pass,  
 'Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,  
 Who fashions the clay no love will change,  
 And fixes a beauty never to fade.  
 'Let Robbia's craft so apt and strange  
 Arrest the remains of young and fair,  
 And rivet them while the seasons range.

'Make me a face on the window there,  
 Waiting as ever, mute the while,  
 My love to pass below in the square!

'And let me think that it may beguile  
 Dreary days which the dead must spend  
 Down in their darkness under the aisle,

'To say, "What matters it at the end?  
 I did no more while my heart was warm  
 Than does that image, my pale-faced  
 friend."

'Where is the use of the lip's red charm,  
 The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
 And the blood that blues the inside arm —

'Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
 The earthly gift to an end divine?  
 A lady of clay is as good, I trow.'

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine  
 With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,  
 Was set where now is the empty shrine —

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,  
 As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,  
 The passionate pale lady's face —

Eyeing ever with earnest eye  
 And quick-turned neck at its breathless  
 stretch,  
 Some one who ever is passing by —)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest  
 wretch  
 In Florence, 'Youth — my dream escapes!  
 Will its record stay?' And he bade them  
 fetch

Some subtle moulder of brazen shapes —  
 'Can the soul, the will, die out of a man  
 Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

'John of Douay shall effect my plan,  
 Set me on horseback here aloft,  
 Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

'In the very square I have crossed so oft!  
 That men may admire, when future suns  
 Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

'While the mouth and the brow stay brave  
 in bronze —  
 Admire and say, "When he was alive,  
 How he would take his pleasure once!"

'And it shall go hard but I contrive  
 To listen the while and laugh in my tomb  
 At idleness which aspires to strive.'

So! while these wait the trump of doom,  
 How do their spirits pass, I wonder,  
 Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder  
 What a gift life was, ages ago,  
 Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

Only they see not God, I know,  
 Nor all that chivalry of His,  
 The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss —  
 Since, the end of life being manifest,  
 He had burned his way thro' the world to  
 this.

I hear you reproach, 'But delay was best,  
 For their end was a crime.' — Oh, a crime  
 will do

As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,  
 Sufficient to vindicate itself  
 And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of  
 self?

Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram  
 To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:  
 As well the counter as coin, I submit,  
 When your table 's a hat, and your prize,  
 a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,  
 Venture as truly, use the same skill,  
 Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play! — is my principle.  
 Let a man contend to the uttermost  
 For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost  
 As surely as if it were lawful coin:  
 And the sin I impute to each frustrate  
 ghost

Is, the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,  
 Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.  
 You of the virtue, (we issue join)  
 How strive you? *De te, fabula!*

## PORPHYRIA'S LOVER

[1838.]

THE rain set early in to-night,  
 The sullen wind was soon awake,  
 It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
 And did its worst to vex the lake:  
 I listened with heart fit to break.  
 When glided in Porphyria; straight  
 She shut the cold out and the storm,  
 And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;  
 Which done, she rose, and from her form  
 Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied  
 Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
 And, last, she sat down by my side  
 And called me. When no voice replied,  
 She put my arm about her waist,  
 And made her smooth white shoulder  
 bare,  
 And all her yellow hair displaced,  
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
 And spread o'er all her yellow hair,  
 Murmuring how she loved me — she  
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,  
 To set its struggling passion free  
 From pride, and vainer ties dis sever,  
 And give herself to me for ever.  
 But passion sometimes would prevail,  
 Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
 A sudden thought of one so pale  
 For love of her, and all in vain;  
 So, she was come through wind and rain.  
 Be sure I looked up at her eyes  
 Happy and proud; at last I knew  
 Porphyria worshipped me; surprise  
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
 While I debated what to do.  
 That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
 Perfectly pure and good: I found  
 A thing to do, and all her hair  
 In one long yellow string I wound  
 Three times her little throat around,  
 And strangled her. No pain felt she;  
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
 As a shut bud that holds a bee,  
 I warily oped her lids; again  
 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.  
 And I untightened next the tress  
 About her neck; her cheek once more  
 Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:  
 I propped her head up as before,  
 Only, this time my shoulder bore  
 Her head, which droops upon it still:  
 The smiling rosy little head,  
 So glad it has its utmost will,  
 That all it scorned at once is fled,  
 And I, its love, am gained instead!  
 Porphyria's love: she guessed not how  
 Her darling one wish would be heard.  
 And thus we sit together now,  
 And all night long we have not stirred,  
 And yet God has not said a word!

'CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK  
TOWER CAME'

(See Edgar's song in 'LEAR')

[1855.]

My first thought was, he lied in every word,  
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye  
 Askance to watch the working of his lie  
 On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford  
 Suppression of the glee that pursed and  
 scored  
 Its edge at one more victim gained  
 thereby.  
 What else should he be set for, with his  
 staff?  
 What, save to waylay with his lies, en-  
 snare  
 All travellers that might find him posted  
 there,  
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-  
 like laugh  
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my  
 epitaph  
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,  
 If at his counsel I should turn aside  
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,  
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquies-  
 cingly  
 I did turn as he pointed; neither pride  
 Nor hope rekindling at the end desried,  
 So much as gladness that some end might  
 be.  
 For, what with my whole world-wide wan-  
 dering,  
 What with my search drawn out thro'  
 years, my hope  
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope  
 With that obstreperous joy success would  
 bring, —  
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring  
 My heart made, finding failure in its  
 scope.  
 As when a sick man very near to death  
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and  
 end  
 The tears and takes the farewell of each  
 friend,  
 And hears one bid the other go, draw  
 breath  
 Freelier outside, ('since all is o'er,' he saith,  
 'And the blow fallen no grieving can  
 amend;')  
 While some discuss if near the other graves  
 Be room enough for this, and when a day  
 Suits best for carrying the corpse away,  
 With care about the banners, scarves and  
 staves, —  
 And still the man hears all, and only  
 craves  
 He may not shame such tender love and  
 stay.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,  
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been  
writ

So many times among 'The Band'!—  
to wit,  
The knights who to the Dark Tower's  
search addressed  
Their steps—that just to fail as they,  
seemed best.

And all the doubt was now—should I  
be fit.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,  
That hateful cripple, out of his highway  
Into the path he pointed. All the day  
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim  
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim  
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

For mark! no sooner was I fairly found  
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two,  
Than, pausing to throw backward a last  
view

To the safe road, 'twas gone: grey plain  
all round:  
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.  
I might go on; nought else remained to  
do.

So, on I went. I think I never saw  
Such starved ignoble nature; nothing  
throve:

For flowers—as well expect a cedar  
grove!

But cockle, spurge, according to their law  
Might propagate their kind, with none to  
awe,

You'd think; a burr had been a treasure-  
trove.

No! penury, inertness and grimace,  
In some strange sort, were the land's  
portion. 'See

Or shut your eyes,' said Nature peevishly,  
'Tis nothing skills: I cannot help my case:  
'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure  
this place,

Calcine its clods and set my prisoners  
free.'

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk  
Above its mates, the head was chopped  
—the bents

Were jealous else. What made those  
holes and rents

In the dock's harsh swarth leaves—bruised  
as to baulk

All hope of greenness? 'tis a brute must  
walk

Pashing their life out, with a brute's in-  
tents.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair  
In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the  
mud

Which underneath looked kneaded up  
with blood.

One stiff-blind horse, his every bone a-stare,  
Stood stupefied, however he came there:  
Thrust out past service from the devil's  
stud!

Alive? he might be dead for aught I know,  
With that red, gaunt and colloped neck  
a-strain,

And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane;  
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such  
woe;

I never saw a brute I hated so;  
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my  
heart.

As a man calls for wine before he fights,  
I asked one draught of earlier, happier  
sights,

Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.  
Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's  
art:

One taste of the old time sets all to  
rights!

Not it! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face  
Beneath its garniture of curly gold,  
Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold  
An arm in mine to fix me to the place,  
That way he used. Alas, one night's dis-  
grace!

Out went my heart's new fire and left it  
cold.

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he  
stands

Frank as ten years ago when knighted  
first.

What honest men should dare (he said)  
he durst.

Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what  
hangman's hands

Pin to his breast a parchment? his own  
bands

Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and  
curst!

Better this Present than a Past like that;  
Back therefore to my darkening path  
again.

No sound, no sight as far as eye could  
strain.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat?  
I asked: when something on the dismal flat  
Came to arrest my thoughts and change  
their train.

A sudden little river crossed my path  
As unexpected as a serpent comes.  
No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms;  
This, as it frothed by, might have been a  
bath

For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the  
wrath

Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and  
spumes.

So petty yet so spiteful! all along,  
Low scrubby alders kneeled down over  
it;  
Drenched willows flung them headlong  
in a fit  
Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:  
The river which had done them all the  
wrong,  
Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no  
whit.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how  
I feared  
To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,  
Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to  
seek  
For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!  
—It may have been a water-rat I speared,  
But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.  
Now for a better country. Vain presage!  
Who were the strugglers, what war did  
they wage,  
Whose savage trample thus could pad the  
dank  
Soil to a splash? toads in a poisoned tank,  
Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

The fight must so have seemed in that fell  
cirque.  
What penned them there, with all the  
plain to choose?  
No footprint leading to that horrid mews,  
None out of it. Mad brewage set to work  
Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves  
the Turk  
Pits for his pastime, Christians against  
Jews.

And more than that—a furlong on—why,  
there!  
What bad use was that engine for, that  
wheel,  
Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to  
reel  
Men's bodies out like silk? with all the air  
Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,  
Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of  
steel.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once  
a wood,  
Next a marsh, it would seem, and now  
mere earth  
Desperate and done with; (so a fool  
finds mirth,  
Makes a thing and then mars it, till his  
mood  
Changes and off he goes!) within a rood—  
Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark  
black dearth.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and  
grim,  
Now patches where some leanness of the  
soil's  
Broke into moss or substances like boils;  
Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him  
Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim  
Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.  
And just as far as ever from the end!  
Nought in the distance but the evening,  
nought  
To point my footstep further! At the  
thought,  
A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-  
friend,  
Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-  
penned  
That brushed my cap—perchance the  
guide I sought.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,  
'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given  
place  
All round to mountains—with such  
name to grace  
Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen  
in view.  
How thus they had surprised me,—solve  
it, you!  
How to get from them was no clearer  
case.

Yet half I seemed to recognize some trick  
Of mischief happened to me, God knows  
when—  
In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended,  
then,  
Progress this way. When, in the very  
nick  
Of giving up, one time more, came a click  
As when a trap shuts—you're inside the  
den!

Burningly it came on me all at once,  
This was the place! those two hills on  
the right,  
Crouched like two bulls locked horn in  
horn in fight;  
While to the left, a tall scalped mountain  
Dunce,  
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,  
After a life spent training for the sight!  
What in the midst lay but the Tower  
itself?  
The round squat turret, blind as the  
fool's heart,  
Built of brown stone, without a coun-  
terpart  
In the whole world. The tempest's mock-  
ing elf  
Points to the shipman thus the unseen  
shelf  
He strikes on, only when the timbers  
start.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—Why,  
day

Came back again for that! before it left,  
The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:  
The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay,  
Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—  
'Now stab and end the creature — to the  
heft!'

Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it  
tolled

Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,  
Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—  
How such a one was strong, and such was  
bold,  
And such was fortunate, yet each of old  
Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe  
of years.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-  
sides, met

To view the last of me, a living frame  
For one more picture! in a sheet of flame  
I saw them and I knew them all. And yet  
Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,  
And blew. '*'Childe Roland to the Dark  
Tower came.'*

#### AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPE-  
RIENCE OF KARSHISH, THE ARAB  
PHYSICIAN

[1855.]

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's  
crumbs,  
The not-incurious in God's handiwork  
(This man's-flesh He hath admirably made,  
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,  
To coop up and keep down on earth a space  
That puff of vapour from His mouth,  
man's soul)

— To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,  
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,  
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks  
Befall the flesh through too much stress  
and strain,

Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip  
Back and rejoin its source before the  
term, —

And aptest in contrivance, under God,  
To baffle it by deftly stopping such:—  
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home  
Sends greeting (health and knowledge,  
fame with peace)

Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer  
still,

One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,  
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than  
drugs)

And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho:  
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art  
Shall count a little labour unrepaid?  
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and  
bone

On many a flinty furlong of this land.  
Also, the country-side is all on fire  
With rumours of a marching hitherward:  
Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.  
A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted  
ear;

Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls:  
I cried and threw my staff and he was  
gone.

Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten  
me,

And once a town declared me for a spy,  
But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,  
Since this poor covert where I pass the  
night,

This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence  
A man with plague-sores at the third de-  
gree

Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laugh-  
est here!

'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,  
To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip  
And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.  
A viscid choler is observable

In tertians, I was nearly bold to say,  
And falling-sickness hath a happier cure  
Than our school wots of: there's a spider  
here

Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of  
tombs,

Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey  
back;

Take five and drop them . . . but who  
knows his mind,

The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to?  
His service payeth me a sublime  
Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.  
Best wait: I reach Jerusalem at morn,  
There set in order my experiences,  
Gather what most deserves, and give thee  
all —

Or I might add, Judaea's gum-tragacanth  
Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-  
grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,  
In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease  
Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy —  
Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at  
Zoar —

But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully,  
Protesteth his devotion is my price —  
Suppose I write what harms not, though he  
steal?

I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,  
What set me off a-writing first of all.  
An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang!  
For, be it this town's barrenness — or else

The Man had something in the look of him—  
 His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth.  
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose  
 In the great press of novelty at hand  
 The care and pains this somehow stole  
 from me)  
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,  
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth?  
 The very man is gone from me but now,  
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.  
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all.

"Tis but a case of mania—subinduced  
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point  
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days,  
 When, by the exhibition of some drug  
 Or spell, exorcization, stroke of art  
 Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,  
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once  
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—  
 But, flinging, so to speak, life's gates too wide,  
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,  
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe  
 Whatever it was minded on the wall  
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,  
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent  
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls  
 The just-returned and new-established soul  
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart  
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.  
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests  
 That he was dead (in fact they buried him)—  
 That he was dead and then restored to life  
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe:  
 —Sayeth, the same bade 'Rise,' and he did rise.  
 'Such cases are diurnal,' thou wilt cry.  
 Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,  
 Instead of giving way to time and health,  
 Should eat itself into the life of life,  
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!  
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.  
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,  
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,  
 The body's habit wholly laudable,  
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health  
 As he were made and put aside to show.  
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug

And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,  
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep!  
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?  
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.  
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,  
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,  
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,  
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—  
 He listened not except I spoke to him,  
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,  
 Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool.  
 And that's a sample how his years must go.  
 Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,  
 Should find a treasure, can he use the same  
 With straitened habits and with tastes starved small  
 And take at once to his impoverished brain  
 The sudden element that changes things,  
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,  
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust?  
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—  
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,  
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times,  
 All prudent counsel as to what befits  
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one:  
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.  
 So here—we'll call the treasure knowledge, say,  
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—  
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,  
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing Heaven.  
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,  
 The value in proportion of all things,  
 Or whether it be little or be much.  
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments  
 Assembled to besiege his city now,  
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds—  
 'Tis one! Then take it on the other side,  
 Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt  
 With stupor at its very littleness,  
 (Far as I see)—as if in that indeed  
 He caught prodigious import, whole results;  
 And so will turn to us the bystanders  
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)  
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.  
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,  
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.  
 Should his child sicken unto death—why, look  
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,  
 Or pretermission of his daily craft—

While a word, gesture, glance, from that same child  
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,  
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,  
 Exasperation, just as like! demand  
 The reason why — 'tis but a word,' object —  
 'A gesture' — he regards thee as our lord  
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,  
 Looked at us, dost thou mind? — when, being young  
 We both would unadvisedly recite  
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,  
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst  
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.  
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike  
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both  
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match  
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know?  
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life —  
 (It is the life to lead perforce)  
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb  
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,  
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet —  
 The spiritual life around the earthly life!  
 The law of that is known to him as this —  
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.  
 So is the man perplext with impulses  
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,  
 Proclaiming what is Right and Wrong across,  
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze —  
 'It should be' balked by 'here it cannot be'.  
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face  
 As if he saw again and heard again  
 His sage that bade him 'Rise' and he did rise.  
 Something, a word, a tick of the blood within  
 Admonishes — then back he sinks at once  
 To ashes, that was very fire before,  
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade  
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;  
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,  
 Professedly the faultier that he knows  
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.  
 Indeed the especial marking of the man  
 Is prone submission to the Heavenly will —  
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.  
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last  
 For that same death which must restore his being  
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul

Divorced even now by premature full growth:  
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live  
 So long as God please, and just how God please.  
 He even seeketh not to please God more  
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.  
 Hence I perceive not he affects to preach  
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,  
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do:  
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,  
 His own conviction? ardent as he is —  
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old 'Be it as God please' reassureth him.  
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should —  
 'How, beast,' said I, 'this stolid carelessness  
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march  
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,  
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?'  
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.  
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?  
 Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,  
 Able and weak — affects the very brutes  
 And birds — how say I? flowers of the field —  
 As a wise workman recognizes tools  
 In a master's workshop, loving what they make.  
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb:  
 Only impatient, let him do his best,  
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin —  
 An indignation which is promptly curbed:  
 As when in certain travails I have feigned  
 To be an ignoramus in our art  
 According to some preconceived design,  
 And hapred to hear the land's practitioners  
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,  
 Prattle fantastically on disease,  
 Its cause and cure — and I must hold my peace!  
 Thou wilt object — why have I not ere this  
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene  
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,  
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?  
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech  
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,  
 Accused, — our learning's fate, — of wizardry,  
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule  
 And creed prodigious as described to me.  
 His death which happened when the earthquake fell  
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss  
 To occult learning in our lord the sage  
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone)  
 Was wrought by the mad people — that's their wont —

On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,  
To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—  
How could he stop the earthquake? That's  
their way!

The other imputations must be lies:  
But take one — though I loathe to give it  
thee,  
In mere respect to any good man's fame!  
(And after all, our patient Lazarus  
Is stark mad; should we count on what he  
says?)

Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech  
'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)  
This man so cured regards the curer, then,  
As — God forgive me — who but God him-  
self,

Creator and Sustainer of the world.  
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!  
— 'Sayeth that such an One was born and  
lived,

Taught, healed the sick; broke bread at his  
own house,  
Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I  
know,

And yet was . . . what I said nor choose  
repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in  
fact,

In hearing of this very Lazarus  
Who saith — but why all this of what he  
saith?

Why write of trivial matters, things of  
price

Calling at every moment for remark?  
I noticed on the margin of a pool  
Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,  
Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange!

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,  
Which, now that I review it, needs must  
seem

Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth!  
Nor I myself discern in what is writ  
Good cause for the peculiar interest

And awe indeed this man has touched me  
with.

Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness  
Had wrought upon me first. I met him  
thus:

I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken  
hills

Like an old lion's cheek-teeth. Out there  
came

A moon made like a face with certain spots  
Multiform, manifold and menacing:

Then a wind rose behind me. So we met  
In this old sleepy town at unaware,

The man and I. I send thee what is writ.  
Regard it as a chance, a matter risked

To this ambiguous Syrian — he may lose,  
Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.

Jerusalem's repose shall make amends

For time this letter wastes, thy time and  
mine;  
Till when, once more thy pardon and fare-  
well!

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou  
think?

So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving  
too —

So, through the thunder comes a human  
voice

Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!  
Face, My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.  
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of  
Mine,

But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,  
And thou must love Me who have died  
for thee!'

The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

### PICTOR IGNOTUS

[FLORENCE, 15—]

[1845.]

I COULD have painted pictures like that  
youth's

Ye praise so. How my soul springs up!  
No bar

Stayed me — ah, thought which saddens  
while it soothes!

— Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
To outburst on your night with all my gift  
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh  
have shrunk

From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
And wide to heaven, or, straight like  
thunder, sunk

To the centre, of an instant: or around  
Turned cal'mly and inquisitive, to scan

The licence and the limit, space and bound,  
Allowed to Truth made visible in Man.  
And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
Over the canvas could my hand have  
flung,

Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
Each passion clear proclaimed without a  
tongue;

Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood.  
A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,

Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her  
brood

Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its  
place;

Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
And locked the mouth fast, like a castle  
braved,—

O human faces, hath it spilt, my cup?  
What did ye give me that I have not  
saved?

Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how  
well!)

Of going — I, in each new picture,—  
forth,

As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell,  
To Pope or Kaiser, East, West, South or North,  
Bound for the calmly satisfied great State,  
Or glad aspiring little burgh, it went,  
Flowers cast upon the car which bore the freight,  
Through old streets named afresh from its event,  
Till it reached home, where learned Age should greet  
My face, and Youth, the star not yet distinct  
Above his hair, lie learning at my feet!—  
Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
With love about, and praise, till life should end,  
And then not go to heaven, but linger here,  
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend.—  
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!  
But a voice changed it! Glimpses of such sights  
Have scared me, like the revels through a door  
Of some strange House of Idols at its rites;  
This world seemed not the world it was before:  
Mixed with my loving trusting ones there trooped  
. . . Who summoned those cold faces that begun  
To press on me and judge me? Though I stooped  
Shrinking, as from the soldiery a nun,  
They drew me forth, and spite of me . . . enough!  
These buy and sell our pictures, take and give,  
Count them for garniture and household-stuff,  
And where they live our pictures needs must live  
And see their faces, listen to their prate,  
Partakers of their daily pettiness,  
Discussed of — 'This I love, or this I hate,  
This likes me more, and this affects me less!'  
Wherefore I chose my portion. If at whiles  
My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,  
With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard.  
At least no merchant traffics in my heart;  
The sanctuary's gloom at least shall ward  
Vain tongues from where my pictures stand apart:

Only prayer breaks the silence of the shrine  
While, blackening in the daily candle-smoke,  
They moulder on the damp wall's traverse,  
'Mid echoes the light footstep never woke.  
So die, my pictures; surely, gently die!  
Oh, youth, men praise so,—holds their praise its worth?  
Blown harshly, keeps the trump its golden cry?  
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?

## FRA LIPPO LIPPI

[1855.]

I AM poor brother Lippo, by your leave!  
You need not clap your torches to my face.  
Zooks, what 's to blame? you think you see a monk!  
What, it 's past midnight, and you go the rounds,  
And here you catch me at an alley's end  
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?  
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,  
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,  
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,  
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,  
*Weke, weke*, that's crept to keep him company!  
Aha, you know your betters? Then, you'll take  
Your hand away that 's fiddling on my throat,  
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?  
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend  
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?  
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,  
In the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!  
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,  
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!  
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves different are.  
Pick up a manner nor discredit you.  
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets  
And count fair prize what comes into their net? an artist, not angry  
He 's Judas to a tittle, that man is!  
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.  
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hang-dogs go

Drink out this quarter-florin to the health  
Of the munificent House that harbours me  
(And many more beside, lads! more  
beside!)

And all's come square again. I'd like his  
face —

His, elbowing on his comrade in the door  
With the pike and lantern, — for the slave  
that holds

John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair  
With one hand ('look you, now,' as who  
should say)

And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!  
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,  
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!  
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.  
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,  
You know them and they take you? like  
enough!

I saw the proper twinkle in your eye —  
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.  
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip  
to haunch.

Here's spring come, and the nights one  
makes up bands

To roam the town and sing out carnival,  
And I've been three weeks shut within my  
mew,

A-painting for the great man, saints and  
saints *order of Rec.*

And saints again. I could not paint all  
night —

Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.  
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,  
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whiffs  
of song, —

*Flower o' the broom, Stornelli*

Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!

*Flower o' the quince,*

I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?

*Flower o' the thyme* — and so on. Round  
they went.

Scarce had they turned the corner when  
a titter

Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,  
— three slim shapes,

And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir,  
flesh and blood,

That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it  
went,

Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,  
All the bed-furniture — a dozen knots,  
There was a ladder! down I let myself,  
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and  
so dropped,

And after them. I came up with the fun  
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well  
met, —

*Flower o' the rose,*

If I've been merry, what matter who knows?

And so as I was stealing back again

To get to bed and have a bit of sleep  
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work

On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast  
With his great round stone to subdue the  
. flesh *cosmetice intent*

You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!  
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake  
your head —

Mine's shaved, — a monk, you say — the  
sting's in that!

If Master Cosimo announced himself, *defensa*

Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!

Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!

I was a baby when my mother died

And father died and left me in the street.

I starved there, God knows how, a year or  
two

On fig skins, melon-parings, rinds and  
shucks,

Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,

My stomach being empty as your hat,

The wind doubled me up and down I went.

Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one

hand,

(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)

And so along the wall, over the bridge,

By the straight cut to the convent. Six

words, there,

While I stood munching my first bread

that month:

'So, boy, you're minded,' quoth the good

fat father

Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-

time, —

'To quit this very miserable world?

Will you renounce' . . . The mouthful of

bread? thought I;

By no means! Brief, they made a monk

of me;

I did renounce the world, its pride and

greed,

Palace, farm, villa, shop and banking-

house,

Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici

Have given their hearts to — all at eight

years old.

Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,

'Twas not for nothing — the good bellyful,

The warm serge and the rope that goes all

round,

And day-long blessed idleness beside!

'Let's see what the urchin's fit for' — that

came next.

Not overmuch their way, I must confess.

Such a to-do! they tried me with their

books.

Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure

waste!

*Flower o' the clove.*

All the Latin I construe is, 'amo' I love!

But, mind you, when a boy starves in the

streets

Eight years together, as my fortune was

Watching folk's faces to know who wil-

*fling training in observation*

The bit of half-striped grape-bunch he desires,  
And who will curse or kick him for his pains—  
Which gentleman processional and fine,  
Holding a candle to the Sacrament  
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch  
The droppings of the wax to sell again,  
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—  
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop  
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—  
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,  
He learns the look of things, and none the less  
For admonitions from the hunger-pinch.  
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,  
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use:  
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,  
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,  
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,  
Found nose and eyes and chin for A's and B's,  
And made a string of pictures of the world  
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,  
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.  
'Nay,' quoth the Prior, 'turn him out, d'ye say?  
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.  
What if at 'ast we get our man of parts,  
We Carmelites, like those Camaldoleses  
And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine  
And put the front on it that ought to be!  
And hereupon they bade me daub away.  
Thank you! my head being crammed, their walls a blank,  
Never was such prompt disemburdening.  
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,  
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folks at church,  
From good old gossips waiting to confess  
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—  
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,  
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there  
With the little children round him in a row  
Of admiration, half for his beard and half  
For that white anger of his victim's son  
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,  
Signing himself with the other because of Christ  
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this

After the passion of a thousand years)  
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,  
(Which the intense eyes looked through)  
came at eve  
On tip-toe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,  
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers  
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.  
I painted all, then cried 'Tis ask and have—  
Choose, for more 's ready! — laid the ladder flat,  
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.  
The monks closed in a circle and praised lectura  
Till checked, — taught what to see and not to see, continua  
Being simple bodies, — 'That 's the very man!  
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!  
That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes  
To care about his asthma: it 's the life!  
But there my triumph 's straw-fire flared and funk'd—  
Their betters took their turn to see and say:  
The Prior and the learned pulled a face  
And stopped all that in no time. 'How? what 's here?  
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!  
Faces, arms, legs and bodies like the true  
As much as pea and pea! it 's devil's-game!  
Your business is not to catch men with show,  
With homage to the perishable clay,  
But lift them over it, ignore it all,  
Make them forget there 's such a thing as flesh.  
Your business is to paint the souls of men—  
Man's soul, and it 's a fire, smoke . . .  
no it 's not . . .  
It 's vapour done up like a new-born babe—  
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)  
It 's . . . well, what matters talking, it 's the soul!  
Give us no more of body than shows soul!  
Here 's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,  
That sets you praising, — why not stop with him?  
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our heads  
With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?

*Anti & false idealism*

Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!

Rub all out, try at it a second time.  
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,  
She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—  
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off—  
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?

A fine way to paint soul, by painting body  
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further  
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white  
When what you put for yellow 's simply black,

And any sort of meaning looks intense  
When all beside itself means and looks nought.  
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,

The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty

You can't discover if it means hope, fear,  
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?

Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,  
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?  
Or say there 's beauty with no soul at all—

(I never saw it—put the case the same—)  
If you get simple beauty and nought else,  
You get about the best thing God invents:  
That 's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,

Within yourself when you return Him thanks.

'Rub all out!' Well, well, there 's my life, in short.

And so the thing has gone on ever since.  
I 'm grown a man no doubt, I 've broken bounds—

You should not take a fellow eight years old

And make him swear to never kiss the girls.

I 'm my own master, paint now as I please—  
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!

Lord, it 's fast holding by the rings in front—

*Realistic touch*

Those great rings serve more purposes than just  
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!  
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes *patron*.  
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,  
The heads shake still—'It 's Art's decline, my son!  
You're not of the true painters, great and old;

Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;  
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:  
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!

*Flower o' the pine,*  
*You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!*

I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!

Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,

They with their Latin? so, I swallow my rage,

Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint

To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't,  
For, doing most, there 's pretty sure to come

A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—

A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—  
(*Flower o' the peach,*  
*Death for us all, and his own life for each!*)

And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,

The world and life 's too big to pass for a dream,

And I do these wild things in sheer despite,  
And play the fooleries you catch me at,  
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass

After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,

Although the miller does not preach to him

The only good of grass is to make chaff.  
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—

May they or mayn't they? all I want 's the thing

Settled for ever one way: as it is,  
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself.  
You don't like what you only like too much,  
You do like what, if given you at your word,

You find abundantly detestable.  
For me, I think I speak as I was taught—  
I always see the Garden and God there A-making man's wife—and, my lesson learned,

The value and significance of flesh,  
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.  
But see, now—why, I see as certainly  
As that the morning-star's about to shine,  
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here

Comes to our convent, studies what I do,  
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop—

His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—

They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—

He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,  
I hope so—though I never live so long,  
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!

You speak no Latin more than I, belike—  
However, you're my man, you've seen the world

—The beauty and the wonder and the power,

The shapes of things, their colours, lights and shades.

Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!

—For what? do you feel thankful, aye or no,

For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,

The mountain round it and the sky above,  
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,

These are the frame to? What's it all about?

To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,  
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.

But why not do as well as say,—paint these

Just as they are, careless what comes of it?  
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime

To let a truth slip. Don't object, 'His works

Are here already—nature is complete:  
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)

There's no advantage! you must beat her, then.'

For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love

First when we see them painted, things we have passed

Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;

And so they are better, painted—better to us,

Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—

God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,

Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,

And trust me but you should, though!  
How much more,  
If I drew higher things with the same truth!

That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,  
Interpret God to all of you! oh, oh,  
It makes me mad to see what men shall do

And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,  
Nor blank—it means intensely, and means good:

To find its meaning is my meat and drink.  
'Aye, but you don't so instigate to prayer!' Strikes in the Prior: 'when your meaning's plain

It does not say to folks—remember matins,

Or, mind you fast next Friday.' Why, for this

What need of art at all? A skull and bones,

Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,

A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.

I painted a Saint Laurence six months since

At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:  
'How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?'

I ask a brother: 'Hugely,' he returns—  
'Already not one phiz of your three slaves  
That turn the Deacon off his toasted side,  
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,

The pious people have so eased their own  
When coming to say prayers there in a rage:

We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.  
Expect another job this time next year,  
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—  
Your painting serves its purpose!' Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word

Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,  
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns

The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!  
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!

It's natural a poor monk out of bounds  
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:

And hearken how I plot to make amends.  
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece . . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see

Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!

They want a cast of my office. I shall paint

*now B. described  
this as most poetic  
and amazingly vivid  
descriptive.*

God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,  
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,  
Lilies and vestments and white faces,  
sweet

As puff on puff of grated orris-root  
When ladies crowd to church at mid-  
summer.

And then in the front, of course a saint  
or two —

Saint John, because he saves the Floren-  
tines,

Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black  
and white

The convent's friends and gives them a long  
day,

And Job, I must have him there past mis-  
take,

The man of Uz, (and Us without the z,  
Painters who need his patience.) Well, all  
these

Secured at their devotions, up shall come  
Out of a corner when you least expect,  
As one by a dark stair into a great light,  
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I! —  
Mazed, motionless and moon-struck — I'm  
the man!

Back I shrink — what is this I see and  
hear?

I, caught up with my monk's things by  
mistake,

My old serge gown and rope that goes all  
round,

I, in this presence, this pure company!  
Where 's a hole, where 's a corner for  
escape?

Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a  
thing

Forward, puts out a soft palm — 'Not so  
fast!'

— Addresses the celestial presence, 'nay —  
He made you and devised you, after all,  
Though he 's none of you! Could Saint  
John there, draw —

His camel-hair make up a painting-brush?  
We come to brother Lippo for all that,  
*Iste perfecit opus!* So, all smile —

I shuffle sideways with my blushing face  
Under the cover of a hundred wings

Thrown like a spread of kirtles when  
you're gay

And play hot cockles, all the doors being  
shut,

Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops  
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off  
To some safe bench behind, not letting go  
The palm of her, the little lily thing

That spoke the good word for me in the  
nick,

Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I  
would say.

And so all 's saved for me, and for the  
church

A pretty picture gained. Go, six months  
hence!

Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights,  
no lights!  
The street 's hushed, and I know my own  
way back,  
Don't fear me! There 's the grey begin-  
ning. Zooks!

### ANDREA DEL SARTO

(CALLED 'THE FAULTLESS PAINTER')

[1855.]

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,  
No, my *Lucrezia*; bear with me for once:  
Sit down and all shall happen as you  
wish.

You turn your face, but does it bring your  
heart?

I'll work then for your friend's friend,  
never fear,

Treat his own subject after his own way,  
Fix his own time, accept too his own  
price,

And shut the money into this small hand  
When next it takes mine. Will it? ten-  
derly?

Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow,  
Love!

I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual, and it  
seems

As if — forgive now — should you let me  
sit

Here by the window with your hand in  
mine

And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this!  
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls  
inside.

Don't count the time lost, either; you must  
serve

For each of the five pictures we require —  
It saves a model. So! keep looking so —  
My serpentinine beauty, rounds on rounds!  
— How could you ever prick those perfect  
ears,

Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet —  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his,  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks — no one's: very dear, no  
less!

You smile? why, there 's my picture ready  
made.

There 's what we painters call our har-  
mony!

A common greyness silvers everything, —  
All in a twilight, you and I alike  
— You, at the point of your first pride in me

(That's gone, you know), — but I, at every point;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down

To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;  
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease

And autumn grows, autumn in everything.  
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.

How strange now, looks the life He makes us lead!

So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!  
I feel He laid the fetter: let it lie!  
This chamber for example — turn your head —

All that's behind us! you don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art,  
But you can hear at least when people speak;

And that cartoon, the second from the door  
— It is the thing, Love! so such things should be —

Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know,  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep —  
Do easily, too — when I say perfectly  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge  
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,  
And just as much they used to say in France.

At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,  
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past —

I do what many dream of all their lives  
— Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,  
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such

On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,  
Who strive — you don't know how the others strive

To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat, —  
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,

(I know his name, no matter) so much less!

Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.  
There burns a truer light of God in them,  
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,

Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.

Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,

Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.

My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
The sudden blood of these men! at a word —

Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.

I, painting from myself and to myself,  
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame

Or their praise either. Somebody remarks Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
His hue mistaken — what of that? or else,  
Rightly traced and well ordered — what of that?

Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey  
Placid and perfect with my art — the worse!  
I know both what I want and what might gain —

And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
'Had I been two, another and myself,  
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!'

No doubt.

Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth

The Urbinate who died five years ago.  
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)

Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,

Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,

Above and through his art — for it gives way;

That arm is wrongly put — and there again —

A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,  
He means right — that, a child may understand.

Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch  
Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out?  
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,

We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think —

More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you — oh, with the same perfect brow,

And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,

And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird

The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—  
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!  
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
 'God and the glory! never care for gain.  
 The Present by the Future, what is that?  
 Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—  
 Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!  
 I might have done it for you. So it seems—  
 Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.  
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;  
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you?  
 What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?  
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not—  
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:  
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—  
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,  
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,  
 That I am something underrated here,  
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,  
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
 The best is when they pass and look aside;  
 But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.  
 Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,  
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!  
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,  
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—  
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,  
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,  
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls  
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—  
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
 This in the background, waiting on my work,  
 To crown the issue with a last reward!  
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days?  
 And had you not grown restless—but I know—  
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;

Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,  
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.  
 How could it end in any other way?  
 You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
 The triumph was, to have ended there; then if  
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,  
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
 'Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—  
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife—  
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge  
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
 For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
 Said one day Angelo, his very self,  
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .  
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
 Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub  
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,  
 Who, were he set to plan and execute  
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!  
 To Rafael's! — And indeed the arm is wrong.  
 I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,  
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!  
 Aye, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!  
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,  
 (What he? why, who but Michael Angelo?)  
 Do you forget already words like those?)  
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,—  
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.  
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!  
 This hour has been an hour! Another smile?  
 If you would sit thus by me every night  
 I should work better, do you comprehend?  
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;  
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.  
 Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,

Inside the melancholy little house  
We built to be so gay with, God is just.  
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at  
nights  
When I look up from painting, eyes tired  
out,  
The walls become illumined, brick from  
brick  
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright  
gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with!  
Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?  
Must see you—you, and not with me?  
Those loans?  
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for  
that?  
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to  
spend?  
While hand and eye and something of a  
heart  
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's  
it worth?  
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
The grey remainder of the evening out,  
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
How I could paint, were I but back in  
France,  
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's  
face,  
Not yours this time! I want you at my  
side  
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—  
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
I take the subjects for his corridor,  
Finish the portrait out of hand—there,  
there,  
And throw him in another thing or two  
If he demurs; the whole should prove  
enough  
To pay for this same Cousin's freaks.  
Beside,  
What's better and what's all I care about,  
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.  
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what  
does he,  
The Cousin! what does he to please you  
more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
I regret little, I would change still less.  
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true  
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
And built this house and sinned, and all is  
said.

My father and my mother died of want.  
Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his  
lot.

They were born poor, lived poor, and poor  
they died:  
And I have laboured somewhat in my time

And not been paid profusely. Some good  
son  
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him  
try!  
No doubt, there's something strikes a  
balance. Yes.  
You loved me quite enough, it seems to  
night.  
This must suffice me here. What would  
one have?  
In Heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more  
chance—  
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem  
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me  
To cover—the three first without a wife,  
While I have mine! So—still they over-  
come  
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.  
Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT  
SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH  
[ROME, 15.—]  
[1845.]

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity!  
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping  
back?  
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know  
not! Well—  
She, men would have to be your mother  
once,  
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!  
What's done is done, and she is dead  
beside,  
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,  
And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
And thence ye may perceive the world's  
a dream.  
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie  
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,  
Hours and long hours in the dead night,  
I ask  
'Do I live, am I dead?' Peace, peace seems  
all.  
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for  
peace;  
And so, about this tomb of mine, | I  
fought *long & spirit*  
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye  
know:  
— Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my  
care;

Shrewd was that snatch from out the cor-  
ner South  
He graced his carrion with, God curse the  
same!  
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but  
thence  
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,

And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,  
 And up into the airy dome where live  
 The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:  
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,  
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,  
 With those nine columns round me, two  
     and two,  
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm  
     stands:  
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe  
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty  
     pulse.  
 — Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,  
 Put me where I may look at him! True  
     peach,  
 Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!  
 Draw close: that conflagration of my  
     church  
 — What then? So much was saved if  
     aught were missed!  
 My sons, ye would not be my death? Go  
     dig  
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-  
     press stood,  
 Drop water gently till the surface sinks,  
 And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not,  
     I!  
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,  
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,  
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,  
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,  
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast. . .  
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,  
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,  
 So, let the blue lump poise between my  
     knees,  
 Like God the Father's globe on both His  
     hands  
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,  
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and  
     burst!  
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:  
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?  
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—  
 'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How  
     else  
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come be-  
     neath?  
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,  
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and  
     perchance  
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,  
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,  
 Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan  
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment  
     off,  
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I know  
 Ye mark me not! What do they whisper  
     thee,  
 Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye  
     hope  
 To revel down my villas while I gasp

Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy traver-  
     tine  
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles  
     at!  
 Nay, boys, ye love me — all of jasper, then!  
 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I  
     grieve  
 My bath must needs be left behind, alas!  
 One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,  
 There's plenty jasper somewhere in the  
     world —  
 And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray  
 Horses for ye, and brown Greek manu-  
     scripts,  
 And mistresses with great smooth marby  
     limbs?  
 — That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,  
 Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every  
     word,  
 No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line —  
 Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his  
     need!  
 And then how I shall lie through cen-  
     turies,  
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,  
 And see God made and eaten all day long,  
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste  
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-  
     smoke!  
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,  
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,  
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,  
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone  
     can point,  
 And let the bedclothes for a mortcloth  
     drop  
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-  
     work:  
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange  
     thoughts  
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,  
 About the life before I lived this life,  
 And this life too, Popes, Cardinals and  
     Priests,  
 Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,  
 Your tall pale mother with her talking  
     eyes,  
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as  
     day,  
 And marble's language, Latin pure, dis-  
     creet,  
 — Aha, *ELUCESCEBAT* quoth our friend?  
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!  
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.  
 All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope  
 My villas: will ye ever eat my heart?  
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,  
 They glitter like your mother's for my  
     soul,  
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished  
     frieze,  
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my  
     vase

*Spirit & Pen. Does not allow  
 to count the diamond (Collins)*

With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,  
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx  
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus  
down,

To comfort me on my entablature  
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask  
'Do I live, am I dead?' There, leave me,  
there!

For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude  
To death — ye wish it — God, ye wish it!  
Stone —

Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares  
which sweat  
As if the corpse they keep were oozing  
through —

And no more *lapis* to delight the world!  
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,  
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs  
— Aye, like departing altar-ministrants,  
And leave me in my church, the church  
for peace,

That I may watch at leisure if he leers —  
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,  
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

### CLEON

'As certain also of your own poets have said' —  
[1855.]

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,  
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,  
And laugh their pride when the light wave  
lisps 'Greece') —

To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:  
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.  
The master of thy galley still unlades  
Gift after gift; they block my court at  
last

And pile themselves along its portico  
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:  
And one white she-slave from the group  
dispersed

Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-  
work)

Pavement, at once my nation's work and  
gift,

Now covered with this settle-down of  
doves),

One lyric woman, in her crocus vest  
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white  
hands

Commends to me the strainer and the cup  
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!  
For so shall men remark, in such an act  
Of love for him whose song gives life its  
joy,

Thy recognition of the use of life;  
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate  
To help on life in straight ways, broad  
enough

For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.  
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower, —  
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of  
toil,

Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,  
Or when the general work 'mid good  
acclaim

Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect, —

Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's  
sake —

Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope  
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,  
Whence, all the tumult of the building  
hushed,

Thou first of men mightst look out to the  
East:

The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the  
sun.

For this, I promise on thy festival  
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,  
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes,  
speak

Thy great words, and describe thy royal  
face —

Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the  
most,

Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me  
here.

It is as thou hast heard: in one short  
life

I, Cleon, have effected all those things  
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.  
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold  
Is mine, — and also mine the little chant,  
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark  
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their  
nets.

The image of the sun-god on the phare  
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is  
mine;

The Poecile, o'er-storied its whole length,  
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine  
too.

I know the true proportions of a man  
And woman also, not observed before;  
And I have written three books on the  
soul,

Proving absurd all written hitherto,  
And putting us to ignorance again.  
For music, — why, I have combined the  
moods,

Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;  
Thus much the people know and recognize,  
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel  
not.

We of these latter days, with greater mind  
Than our forerunners, since more com-  
posite,

Look not so great, beside their simple way,  
To a judge who only sees one way at once,  
One mind-point, and no other at a time, —

Compares the small part of a man of us  
With some whole man of the heroic age,  
Great in his way — not ours, nor meant for  
ours;

And ours is greater, had we skill to know.  
For, what we call this life of men on  
earth,

This sequence of the soul's achievements  
here,

Being, as I find much reason to conceive,  
Intended to be viewed eventually  
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,  
But each part having reference to all,—  
How shall a certain part, pronounced com-  
plete,

Endure effacement by another part?  
Was the thing done? — Then, what's to do  
again?

See, in the chequered pavement opposite,  
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,  
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid —  
He did not overlay them, superimpose  
The new upon the old and blot it out,  
But laid them on a level in his work,  
Making at last a picture; there it lies.  
So, first the perfect separate forms were  
made,

The portions of mankind — and after, so,  
Occurred the combination of the same.  
Or where had been a progress, otherwise?  
Mankind, made up of all the single men, —  
In such a synthesis the labour ends.

Now, mark me — those divine men of old  
time

Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one  
point

The outside verge that rounds our faculty;  
And where they reached, who can do more  
than reach?

It takes but little water just to touch  
At some one point the inside of a sphere,  
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the  
rest

In due succession: but the finer air  
Which not so palpably nor obviously,  
Though no less universally, can touch  
The whole circumference of that emptied  
sphere,

Fills it more fully than the water did;  
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself  
Resolved into a subtler element.

And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full  
Up to the visible height — and after, void;  
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.  
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to  
Zeus

To vindicate his purpose in our life —  
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?  
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction  
out,

That he or other God, descended here  
And, once for all, showed simultaneously  
What, in its nature, never can be shown

Piecemeal or in succession; — showed, I  
say,

The worth both absolute and relative  
Of all his children from the birth of  
time,

His instruments for all appointed work.  
I now go on to image, — might we hear  
The judgment which should give the due to  
each,

Show where the labour lay and where the  
ease,

And prove Zeus' self, the latent, every-  
where!

This is a dream. But no dream, let us  
hope,

That years and days, the summers and  
the springs

Follow each other with unwaning powers;  
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer  
far

Through culture, than the wild wealth of  
the rock;

The suave plum than the savage-tasted  
drupe;

The pastured honey-bee drops choicer  
sweet;

The flowers turn double, and the leaves  
turn flowers;

That young and tender crescent-moon, thy  
slave,

Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,  
Refines upon the women of my youth.

What, and the soul alone deteriorates?  
I have not chanted verse like Homer's,  
no —

Nor swept string like Terpander, no —  
nor carved

And painted men like Phidias and his  
friend:

I am not great as they are, point by point:  
But I have entered into sympathy  
With these four, running these into one  
soul,

Who, separate, ignored each other's arts.  
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?  
The wild flower was the larger — I have  
dashed

Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its  
cup's

Honey with wine, and driven its seed to  
fruit,

And show a better flower if not so large.  
I stand myself. Refer this to the gods  
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I  
dare

(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext  
That such a gift by chance lay in my  
hand,

Discourse of lightly or deprecate?  
It might have fallen to another's hand —  
what then?

I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.

This being with me as I declare, O king,  
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,  
So done by me, accepted so by men—  
Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)

I must not be accounted to attain  
The very crown and proper end of life.  
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,  
I face death with success in my right hand.

Whether I fear death less than dost thyself

The fortunate of men. 'For' (writest thou)

'Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought:

Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,  
The pictures men shall study; while my life,

Complete and whole now in its power and joy.

Dies altogether with my brain and arm,  
Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?  
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,  
Set on the promontory which I named.

And that—some supple courtier of my heir  
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,

To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.

I go, then: triumph thou, who dost not go!

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.

Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse  
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,

That admiration grows as knowledge grows?

That imperfection means perfection hid,  
Reserved in part, to grace the aftertime?  
If, in the morning of philosophy,  
Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived.

Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked

On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,  
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—  
Thou wouldest have seen them perfect, and deduced

The perfectness of others yet unseen.  
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee

'Shall I go on a step, improve on this,  
Do more for visible creatures than is done?'  
Thou wouldest have answered, 'Aye, by making each

Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.  
All's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,

The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims

And slides, the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,

Till life's mechanics can no further go—  
And all this joy in natural life is put

Like fire from off Thy finger into each,  
So exquisitely perfect is the same.

But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are;

It has them, not they it: and so I choose  
For man, Thy last premeditated work  
(If I might add a glory to the scheme)  
That a third thing should stand apart from both,

A quality arise within the soul,  
Which, intro-active, made to supervise  
And feel the force it has, may view itself,  
And so be happy.' Man might live at first  
The animal life: but is there nothing more?  
In due time, let him critically learn  
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know

Of his own life's adaptabilities.  
The more joy-giving will his life become.  
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:

'Let progress end at once,—man make no step

Beyond the natural man, the better beast,  
Using his senses, not the sense of sense.'  
In man there's failure, only since he left  
The lower and unconscious forms of life.  
We called it an advance, the rendering plain  
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,

And, by new lore so added to the old,  
Take each step higher over the brute's head.

This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,  
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,

Which whole surrounding flats of natural life

Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;  
A tower that crowns a country. But alas!  
The soul now climbs it just to perish there!

For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—

We know this, which we had not else perceived)

That there's a world of capability  
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,

Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,  
And still the flesh replies, 'Take no jot more

Than ere thou climbst the tower to look abroad!

Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought

Deduction to it.' We struggle — fain to  
enlarge

Our bounded physical recipiency,  
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,  
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,  
It skills not: life's inadequate to joy,  
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.  
They praise a fountain in my garden here  
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow  
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it  
rise.

What if I told her, it is just a thread  
From that great river which the hills shut  
up,  
And mock her with my leave to take the  
same?

The artificer has given her one small tube  
Past power to widen or exchange — what  
boots

To know she might spout oceans if she  
could?

She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread,  
And so a man can use but a man's joy  
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to  
boast,

'See, man, how happy I live, and despair —  
That I may be still happier — for thy use!'  
If this were so, we could not thank our  
Lord,

As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so —  
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?

Still, no. If care — where is the sign, I  
ask —

And get no answer: and agree in sum,  
O king, with thy profound discouragement,  
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.  
Most progress is most failure! thou sayest  
well.

The last point now: — thou dost except  
a case —

Holding joy not impossible to one  
With artist-gifts — to such a man as I —  
Who leave behind me living works indeed;  
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.  
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word.  
Confound the accurate view of what joy  
is

(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than  
thine)

With feeling joy? confound the knowing  
how

And showing how to live (my faculty)  
With actually living? — Otherwise  
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?  
Because in my great epos I display  
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise,  
can act —

Is this as though I acted? if I paint,  
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore  
young?

Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself  
The many years of pain that taught me art!  
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove

How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is  
more:

But, knowing nought, to enjoy is some-  
thing too.

Yon rower with the moulded muscles there,  
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.  
I can write love-odes — thy fair slave 's an  
ode.

I get to sing of love, when grown too grey  
For being beloved: she turns to that young  
man,

The muscles all a-ripple on his back.

I know the joy of kingship: well — thou  
art king!'

'But,' sayest thou — (and I marvel, I  
repeat,  
To find thee tripping on a mere word)  
'what

Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not  
die:

Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,  
And Æschylus, because we read his plays!'  
Why, if they live still, let them come and  
take

Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy  
cup,

Speak in my place. Thou diest while I  
survive?

Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,  
In this, that every day my sense of joy  
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
By power and insight) more enlarged,  
more keen;

While every day my hairs fall more and  
more,

My hand shakes, and the heavy years in-  
crease —

The horror quickening still from year to  
year,

The consummation coming past escape,  
When I shall know most, and yet least  
enjoy —

When all my works wherein I prove my  
worth,

Being present still to mock me in men's  
mouths,

Alive still, in the praise of such as thou,  
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,  
The man who loved his life so overmuch,  
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
I dare at times imagine to my need  
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,  
Unlimited in capability

For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
—To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:  
That, stung by straitness of our life, made  
strait

On purpose to make prized the life at  
large —

Freed by the throbbing impulse we call  
death

We burst there as the worm into the fly,

Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.

But, no!

Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas,  
He must have done so, were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought  
die,  
Glad for what was. Farewell. And for  
the rest,  
I cannot tell thy messenger aright  
Where to deliver what he bears of thine  
To one called Paulus — we have heard his  
fame

Indeed, if Christus be not one with him —  
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.  
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,  
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,  
Hath access to a secret shut from us?  
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,  
In stooping to inquire of such an one,  
As if his answer could impose at all.  
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may  
write.

Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves  
Who touched on this same isle, preached  
him and Christ;  
And (as I gathered from a bystander)  
Their doctrine could be held by no sane  
man.

### RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI

[1842.]

#### I

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun per-  
ceives  
First when he visits, last, too, when he  
leaves  
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays  
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze  
By no change of its large calm front of  
snow.  
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I  
know,  
He cannot have perceived, that changes  
ever  
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour  
To live his life, has parted, one by one,  
With all a flower's true graces, for the  
grace  
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,  
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.  
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount  
As over many a land of theirs its large  
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe  
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh  
ones vie,  
Each to its proper praise and own account:  
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sport-  
ively.

#### II

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look  
Across the waters to this twilight nook,  
— The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

#### III

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?  
Go! Saying ever as thou dost proceed  
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device  
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice  
Before its idol. See! These inexpert  
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt  
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill  
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill  
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men  
feed  
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the  
bees  
On my flower's breast as on a platform  
broad:  
But, as the flower's concern is not for these  
But solely for the sun, so men applaud  
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here  
But to the East — the East! Go, say this,  
Pilgrim dear!

### ONE WORD MORE\*

TO E. B. B.

*London, September, 1855*

#### I

THERE they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished!  
Take them, Love, the book and me to-  
gether:  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

#### II

Rafael made a century of sonnets,  
Made and wrote them in a certain volume  
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil  
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:  
These, the world might view — but One,  
the volume.  
Who that one, you ask? Your heart in-  
structs you.  
Did she live and love it all her lifetime?  
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,  
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow  
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,  
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving —  
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a  
painter's,  
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a  
poet's?

#### III

You and I would rather read that volume,  
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)  
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,  
Would we not? than wonder at Ma-  
donnas —  
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,  
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,

\* Originally appended to the collection of Poems called 'Men and Women,' the greater portion of which has now been, more correctly, distributed under the other titles of this volume.

Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—  
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

## IV

You and I will never read that volume.  
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple  
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved  
it.  
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna  
Cried, and the world cried too, 'Ours—  
the treasure!'  
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

## V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:  
Whom to please? You whisper 'Beatrice.'  
While he mused and traced it and retraced  
it,  
(Peradventure with a pen corroded  
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped  
for,  
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the  
wicked,  
Back he held the brow and pricked its  
stigma,  
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,  
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing  
rankle,  
Let the wretch go festering through Flor-  
ence)—

Dante, who loved well because he hated,  
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,  
Dante standing, studying his angel,—  
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.  
Says he—'Certain people of importance'  
(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)  
'Entered and would seize, forsooth, the  
poet.'  
Says the poet—'Then I stopped my paint-  
ing.'

## VI

You and I would rather see that angel,  
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,  
Would we not?—than read a fresh In-  
ferno.

## VII

You and I will never see that picture.  
While he mused on love and Beatrice,  
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,  
In they broke, those 'people of importance':  
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

## VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?  
This: no artist lives and loves, that longs  
not  
Once, and only once, and for One only,  
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language  
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—  
Using nature that's an art to others,  
Not, this one time, art that's turned his  
nature.  
Aye, of all the artists living, loving,

None but would forgo his proper dowry,—  
Does he paint? he fain would write a  
poem,—

Does he write? he fain would paint a pic-  
ture,

Put to proof art alien to the artist's,  
Once, and only once, and for One only,  
So to be the man and leave the artist,  
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

## IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's  
abatement!

He who smites the rock and spreads the  
water,  
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath  
him,

Even he, the minute makes immortal  
Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,  
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.  
While he smites, how can he but remember,  
So he smote before, in such a peril,  
When they stood and mocked—'Shall smit-  
ing help us?'

When they drank and sneered—'A stroke  
is easy!'

When they wiped their mouths and went  
their journey,  
Throwing him for thanks—'But drought  
was pleasant.'

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;  
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;  
Thus achievement lacks a gracious some-  
what;

O'er-importuned brows becloud the man-  
date,

Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.  
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,  
Sees and knows again those phalanx'd  
faces,

Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed  
prelude—

'How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and  
save us?'

Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—  
'Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was  
better.'

## X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!  
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven bri-  
lliance,

Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial  
fiat.

Never dares the man put off the prophet.

## XI

Did he love one face from out the thou-  
sands,

(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and  
wifely,

Were she but the Aethiopian bond-slave,) He would envy yon dumb patient camel,  
Keeping a reserve of scanty water

Meant to save his own life in the desert:  
Ready in the desert to deliver  
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)  
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

## XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you  
statues,  
Make you music that should all-express  
me;

So it seems: I stand on my attainment.  
This of verse alone, one life allows me;  
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
Other heights in other lives, God willing—  
All the gifts from all the heights, your  
own, Love!

## XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—  
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must  
seize it.

Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,  
Lines I write the first time and the last  
time.

He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,

Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,  
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little.  
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,  
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.  
He who blows thro' silver, may breathe

thro' silver,

Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.

He who writes, may write for once as I do.

## XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,  
Enter each and all, and use their service.  
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a  
poem.

Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:  
I am mine and yours—the rest be all  
men's,

Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.  
Let me speak this once in my true person,  
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,  
Though the fruit of speech be just this  
sentence—

Pray you, look on these my men and wo-men,  
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;  
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!  
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all  
things.

## XV

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's  
self!

Here in London, yonder late in Florence,  
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.

Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,

Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,  
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.

Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,  
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,  
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.  
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,  
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,  
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,  
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

## XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy?

Nay—for if that moon could love a mortal,

Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),  
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),  
She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—

Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,  
Blind to Galileo on his turret,  
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!

Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—

When she turns round, comes again in heaven,

Opens out anew for worse or better!  
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg

Swimming full upon the ship it founders,  
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?

Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire

Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu  
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,  
Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.  
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,

When they ate and drank and saw God also!

## XVII

What were seen? None knows, none ever  
shall know.

Only this is sure—the sight were other,  
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence.

Dying now impoverished here in London.  
God be thanked, the meanest of His creatures

Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world  
with,

One to show a woman when he loves her.

## XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!  
This to you—youself your moon of poets!

Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's  
the wonder,  
Thus they see you, praise you, think they  
know you.

There, in turn I stand with them and praise  
you,

Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
But the best is when I glide from out them,  
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
Come out on the other side, the novel  
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

## XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,  
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it,  
Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom!

R. B.

## ABT VOGLER

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON  
THE MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS  
INVENTION)  
[1864.]

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build.  
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,  
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when Solomon willed  
Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,  
Man, brute, reptile, fly, — alien of end and of aim,  
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep removed, —  
Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable Name,  
And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he loved!

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,  
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to raise!  
Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now combine,  
Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his praise!  
And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,  
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,  
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well.  
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent minion he was,  
Aye, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a crest,

Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,  
Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest:  
For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,  
When a great illumination surprises a festal night —  
Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)  
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,  
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;  
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,  
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:  
Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with mine,  
Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering star;  
Meteoro-moons, balls of blaze: and they did not pale nor pine,  
For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near nor far.

Nay more; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and glow,  
Presences plain in the place; or, fresh from the Protoplasm,  
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should blow,  
Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last;  
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the body and gone,  
But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth their new:  
What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;  
And what is, — shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,  
All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,  
All through music and me! For think, had I painted the whole,  
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:  
Had I written the same, made verse — still, effect proceeds from cause,  
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;  
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,  
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled: —

But here is the finger of God, a flash of  
the will that can,  
Existent behind all laws, that made them  
and, lo, they are!  
And I know not if, save in this, such gift  
be allowed to man,  
That out of three sounds he frame, not  
a fourth sound, but a star.  
Consider it well: each tone of our scale in  
itself is nought;  
It is everywhere in the world — loud, soft,  
and all is said:  
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in  
my thought;  
And, there! Ye have heard and seen:  
consider and bow the head!

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music  
I reared;  
Gone! and the good tears start, the  
praises that come too slow;  
For one is assured at first, one scarce can  
say that he feared,  
That he even gave it a thought, the gone  
thing was to go.  
Never to be again! But many more of the  
kind  
As good, nay, better perchance: is this  
your comfort to me?  
To me, who must be saved because I cling  
with my mind  
To the same, same self, same love, same  
God: aye, what was shall be.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the  
ineffable Name?  
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not  
made with hands!  
What, have fear of change from Thee who  
art ever the same?  
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart  
that Thy power expands?  
There shall never be one lost good! What  
was, shall live as before;  
The evil is null, is nought, is silence im-  
plying sound;  
What was good, shall be good, with, for  
evil, so much good more;  
On the earth the broken arcs; in the  
heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed  
of good, shall exist;  
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty,  
nor good, nor power  
Whose voice has gone forth, but each sur-  
vives for the melodist  
When eternity affirms the conception of  
an hour.  
The high that proved too high, the heroic  
for earth too hard,  
The passion that left the ground to lose  
itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and  
the bard;  
Enough that He heard it once: we shall  
hear it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a tri-  
umph's evidence  
For the fullness of the days? Have we  
withered or agonized?  
Why else was the pause prolonged but  
that singing might issue thence?  
Why rushed the discords in, but that  
harmony should be prized?  
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow  
to clear,  
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of  
the weal and woe:  
But God has a few of us whom He whis-  
pers in the ear;  
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we  
musicians know.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes  
her reign:  
I will be patient and proud, and soberly  
acquiesce.  
Give me the keys. I feel for the common  
chord again,  
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the  
minor,—yes,  
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on  
alien ground,  
Surveying a while the heights I rolled  
from into the deep;  
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for  
my resting-place is found,  
The C Major of this life: so, now I  
will try to sleep.

### RABBI BEN EZRA

[1864.]

#### I

GROW old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was  
made:  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith 'A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all,  
nor be afraid!'

#### II

Not that, amassing flowers,  
Youth sighed 'Which rose make ours,  
Which lily leave and then as best recall?'  
Not that, admiring stars,  
It yearned 'Nor Jove, nor Mars;  
Mine be some figured flame which blends,  
transcends them all!'

## III

Not for such hopes and fears  
 Annulling youth's brief years,  
 Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!  
 Rather I prize the doubt  
 Low kinds exist without,  
 Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a  
 spark.

## IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
 Were man but formed to feed  
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:  
 Such feasting ended, then  
 As sure an end to men;  
 Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt  
 the maw-crammed beast?

## V

Rejoice we are allied  
 To That which doth provide  
 And not partake, effect and not receive!  
 A spark disturbs our clod;  
 Nearer we hold of God  
 Who gives, than of His tribes that take,  
 I must believe.

## VI

Then, welcome each rebuff  
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but  
 go!  
 Be our joys three-parts pain!  
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never  
 grudge the throe!

## VII

For thence,— a paradox  
 Which comforts while it mocks,—  
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:  
 What I aspire to be,  
 And was not, comforts me:  
 A brute I might have been, but would not  
 sink i' the scale

## VIII

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh hath soul to suit,  
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs  
 want play?  
 To man, propose this test—  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its  
 lone way?

## IX

Yet gifts should prove their use:  
 I own the Past profuse  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn:  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole;  
 Should not the heart beat once 'How good  
 to live and learn?'

## X

Not once beat 'Praise be Thine!  
 I see the whole design,  
 I, who saw Power, see now Love perfect  
 too:  
 Perfect I call Thy plan:  
 Thanks that I was a man!  
 Maker, remake, complete,— I trust what  
 Thou shalt do!'

## XI

For pleasant is this flesh;  
 Our soul in its rose-mesh  
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for  
 rest:  
 Would we some prize might hold  
 To match those manifold  
 Possessions of the brute,— gain most, as  
 we did best!

## XII

Let us not always say  
 'Spite of this flesh to-day  
 I strove, made head, gained ground upon  
 the whole!'  
 As the bird wings and sings,  
 Let us cry 'All good things  
 Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now,  
 than flesh helps soul!'

## XIII

Therefore I summon age  
 To grant youth's heritage,  
 Life's struggle having so far reached its  
 term:  
 Thence shall I pass, approved  
 A man, for ay removed  
 From the developed brute; a God though  
 in the germ.

## XIV

And I shall thereupon  
 Take rest, ere I be gone  
 Once more on my adventure brave and  
 new:  
 Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armour to  
 induct.

## XV

Youth ended, I shall try  
 My gain or loss thereby;  
 Be the fire ashes, what survives is gold:  
 And I shall weigh the same,  
 Give life its praise or blame:  
 Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know,  
 being old.

## XVI

For note, when evening shuts,  
 A certain moment cuts  
 The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:  
 A whisper from the west  
 Shoots — 'Add this to the rest,  
 Take it and try its worth: here dies another day.'

## XVII

So, still within this life,  
Though lifted o'er its strife,  
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
'This rage was right i' the main,  
That acquiescence vain:  
The Future I may face now I have proved  
the Past.'

## XVIII

For more is not reserved  
To man, with soul just nerved  
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:  
Here, work enough to watch  
The Master work, and catch  
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the  
tools' true play.

## XIX

As it was better, youth  
Should strive, through acts uncouth,  
Toward making, than repose on aught  
found made;  
So, better, age, exempt  
From strife, should know, than tempt  
Further. Thou waitedest age; wait death  
nor be afraid!

## XX

Enough now, if the Right  
And Good and Infinite  
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand  
thine own,  
With knowledge absolute,  
Subject to no dispute  
From fools that crowded youth, nor let  
thee feel alone.

## XXI

Be there, for once and all,  
Severed great minds from small,  
Announced to each his station in the Past!  
Was I, the world arraigned,  
Were they, my soul disdained,  
Right? Let age speak the truth and give  
us peace at last!

## XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?  
Ten men love what I hate,  
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;  
Ten, who in ears and eyes  
Match me: we all surmise,  
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall  
my soul believe?

## XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called 'work,' must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had  
the price;  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value  
in a trice:

## XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled  
the man's amount:

## XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and  
escaped;  
All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the  
pitcher shaped.

## XXVI

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,  
That metaphor! and feel  
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our  
clay,—  
Thou, to whom fools propound,  
When the wine makes its round,  
'Since life fleets, all is change; the Past  
gone, seize to-day!'

## XXVII

Fool! All that is, at all,  
Lasts ever, past recall;  
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand  
sure:  
What entered into thee,  
*That* was, is, and shall be:  
Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter  
and clay endure.

## XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance  
Of plastic circumstance,  
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain  
arrest:  
Machinery just meant  
To give thy soul its bent,  
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently  
impressed.

## XXIX

What though the earlier grooves  
Which ran the laughing loves  
Around thy base, no longer pause and  
press?  
What though, about thy rim,  
Skull-things in order grim  
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner  
stress?

## XXX

Look not thou down but up!  
To uses of a cup,  
The festal board, lamp's flash and trum-  
pet's peal,  
The new wine's foaming flow,  
The Master's lips aglow!  
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what  
needst thou with earth's wheel?

## XXXI

But I need, now as then,  
Thee, God, who mouldest men;  
And since, not even while the whirl was  
worst,  
Did I,— to the wheel of life  
With shapes and colours rife,  
Bound dizzily,— mistake my end, to slake  
Thy thirst:

## XXXII

So, take and use Thy work!  
Amend what flaws may lurk,  
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings  
past the aim!  
My times be in Thy hand!  
Perfect the cup as planned!  
Let age approve of youth, and death complete  
the same!

CALIBAN UPON SETEBOS;  
OR, *Establishing*

NATURAL THEOLOGY IN THE ISLAND  
'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an  
one as thyself.'

[1864.] — 50<sup>th</sup> issue

[WILL sprawl, now that the heat of day is  
best,  
Flat on his belly in the pit's much mire,  
With elbows wide, fists clenched to prop his  
chin;  
And, while he kicks both feet in the cool  
slush,  
And feels about his spine small eft-things  
course,  
Run in and out each arm, and make him  
laugh;  
And while above his head a pompon-plant,  
Coating the cave-top as a brow its eye,  
Creeps down to touch and tickle hair and  
beard,  
And now a flower drops with a bee inside,  
And now a fruit to snap at, catch and  
crunch:  
He looks out o'er yon sea which sunbeams  
cross  
And recross till they weave a spider-web  
(Meshes of fire, some great fish breaks at  
times),  
And talks to his own self, how'er he  
please,  
Touching that other, whom his dam called  
God.  
Because to talk about Him, vexes — ha,  
Could He but know! and time to vex is  
now,  
When talk is safer than in winter-time.  
Moreover Prosper and Miranda sleep  
In confidence he drudges at their task,  
And it is good to cheat the pair, and  
gibe  
Letting the rank tongue blossom into  
speech.]

*short beginning*  
*Setebos, Setebos, and Setebos!*

'Thinketh, He dwelleth i' the cold o' the  
moon.

'Thinketh, He made it, with the sun to  
match,  
But not the stars; the stars came other-  
wise;  
Only made clouds, winds, meteors, such as  
that:  
Also this isle, what lives and grows thereon,  
And snaky sea which rounds and ends the  
same.

'Thinketh, it came of being ill at ease:  
He hated that He cannot change His cold,  
Nor cure its ache. 'Hath spied an icy fish  
That longed to 'scape the rock-stream where  
she lived,

And thaw herself within the lukewarm  
brine

O' the lazy sea her stream thrusts far amid,  
A crystal spike 'twixt two warm walls of  
wave;  
Only she ever sickened, found repulse  
At the other kind of water, not her life,  
(Green-dense and dim-delicious, bred o' the  
sun)

Flounched back from bliss she was not born  
to breathe,  
And in her old bounds buried her despair,  
Hating and loving warmth alike: so He.

'Thinketh, He made thereat the sun, this  
isle,

Trees and the fowls here, beast and creep-  
ing thing.

Yon otter, sleek-wet, black, lithe as a leech;  
Yon auk, one fire-eye in a ball of foam,  
That floats and feeds; a certain badger  
brown

He hath watched hunt with that slant  
white-wedge eye

By moonlight; and the pie with the long  
tongue

That pricks deep into oakwarts for a worm,  
And says a plain word when she finds her  
prize,

But will not eat the ants; the ants them-  
selves

That build a wall of seeds and settled  
stalks

About their hole — He made all these and  
more,

Made all we see, and us, in spite: how  
else?

He could not, Himself, make a second  
self

To be His mate; as well have made Him-  
self.

He would not make what He mislikes or  
slights,

An eyesore to Him, or not worth His  
pains;

*attracting  
pedestrians  
on which some  
brought up.*

But did, in envy, listlessness or sport,  
Make what Himself would fain, in a manner, be—  
Weaker in most points, stronger in a few,  
Worthy, and yet mere playthings all the while,  
Things He admires and mocks too,—that is it.  
Because, so brave, so better though they be,  
It nothing skills if He begin to plague.  
Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,  
Add honeycomb and pods, I have perceived,  
Which bite like finches when they bill and kiss,—  
Then, when froth rises bladdery, drink up all,  
Quick, quick, till maggots scamper through my brain;  
And throw me on my back i' the seeded thyme,  
And wanton, wishing I were born a bird.  
Put case, unable to be what I wish,  
I yet could make a live bird out of clay:  
Would not I take clay, pinch my Caliban  
Able to fly? — for, there, see, he hath wings,  
And great comb like the hoopoe's to admire,  
And there, a sting to do his foes offence,  
There, and I will that he begin to live,  
Fly to yon rock-top, nip me off the horns  
Of grigs high up that make the merry din,  
Saucy through their veined wings, and mind me not.  
In which feat, if his leg snapped, brittle clay,  
And he lay stupid-like,—why, I should laugh;  
And if he, spying me, should fall to weep,  
Beseech me to be good, repair his wrong,  
Bid his poor leg smart less or grow again,—  
Well, as the chance were, this might take or else  
Not take my fancy: I might hear his cry,  
And give the manikin three legs for his one.  
Or pluck the other off, leave him like an egg,  
And lessoned he was mine and merely clay.  
Were this no pleasure, lying in the thyme,  
Drinking the mash, with brain become alive,  
Making and marring clay at will? So He.  
'Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,  
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.  
'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs  
That march now from the mountain to the sea;  
'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,

Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.  
'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots  
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;  
'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,  
And two worms he whose nippers end in red;  
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.  
Well then, 'supposeth He is good i' the main,  
Placable if His mind and ways were guessed,  
But rougher than His handiwork, be sure!  
Oh, He hath made things worthier than Himself,  
And envieth that, so helped, such things do more  
Than He who made them! What consoles but this?  
That they, unless through Him, do nought at all,  
And must submit: what other use in things?  
'Hath cut a pipe of pithless elder-joint  
That, blown through, gives exact the scream o' the jay  
When from her wing you twitch the feathers blue:  
Sound this, and little birds that hate the jay  
Flock within stone's throw, glad their foe is hurt:  
Put case such pipe could prattle and boast forsooth  
'I catch the birds, I am the crafty thing,  
I make the cry my maker cannot make  
With his great round mouth; he must blow through mine!'  
Would not I smash it with my foot? So He.  
But wherefore rough, why cold and ill at ease?  
Aha, that is a question! Ask, for that, What knows,—the something over Setebos That made Him, or He, may be, found and fought,  
Worsted, drove off and did to nothing, perchance.  
There may be something quiet o'er His head,  
Out of His reach, that feels nor joy nor grief,  
Since both derive from weakness in some way.  
I joy because the quails come; would not joy  
Could I bring quails here when I have a mind:  
This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth.  
'Esteemeth stars the outposts of its couch.

But never spends much thought nor care  
that way.  
It may look up, work up,—the worse for  
those  
It works on! 'Careth but for Setebos  
The many-handed as a cuttle-fish,  
Who, making Himself feared through what  
He does,  
Looks up, first, and perceives He cannot  
soar  
To what is quiet and hath happy life;  
Next looks down here, and out of very  
spite  
Makes this a bauble-world to ape yon real,  
These good things to match those as hips  
do grapes.  
'Tis solace making baubles, aye; and sport.  
Himself peeped late, eyed Prosper at his  
books  
Careless and lofty, lord now of the isle:  
Vexed, 'stitched a book of broad leaves,  
arrow-shaped,  
Wrote thereon, he knows what, prodigious  
words:  
Has peeled a wand and called it by a name;  
Weareth at whiles for an enchanter's robe  
The eyed skin of a supple oncelot;  
And hath an ounce sleeker than youngling  
mole,  
A four-legged serpent he makes cower and  
couch,  
Now snarl, now hold its breath and mind  
his eye,  
And saith she is Miranda and my wife:  
'Keeps for his Ariel a tall pouch-bill crane  
He bids go wade for fish and straight dis-  
gorge;  
Also a sea-beast, lumpish, which he  
snared,  
Blinded the eyes of, and brought somewhat  
tame,  
And split its toe-webs, and now pens the  
drudge  
In a hole o' the rock and calls him Caliban;  
A bitter heart, that bides its time and  
bites.  
'Plays thus at being Prosper in a way,  
Taketh his mirth with make-believes: so  
He.

His dam held that the Quiet made all  
things  
Which Setebos vexed only: 'holds not so.  
Who made them weak, meant weakness He  
might vex.  
Had He meant other, while His hand was  
in,  
Why not make horny eyes no thorn could  
prick,  
Or plate my scalp with bone against the  
snow,  
Or overscale my flesh 'neath joint and  
joint,

Like an orc's armour? Aye,—so spoil  
His sport!  
He is the One now: only He doth all.  
'Saith, He may like, perchance, what profits  
Him.  
Aye, himself loves what does him good;  
but why?  
'Gets good no otherwise. This blinded  
beast  
Loves whoso places flesh-meat on his nose,  
But, had he eyes, would want no help, but  
hate  
Or love, just as it liked him: He hath  
eyes.  
Also it pleaseth Setebos to work,  
Use all His hands, and exercise much  
craft,  
By no means for the love of what is  
worked.  
'Tasteth, himself, no finer good i' the  
world  
When all goes right, in this safe summer-  
time,  
And he wants little, hungers, aches not  
much,  
Than trying what to do with wit and  
strength.  
'Falls to make something: 'piled yon pile  
of turfs,  
And squared and stuck there squares of  
soft white chalk,  
And, with a fish-tooth, scratched a moon  
on each,  
And set up endwise certain spikes of tree,  
And crowned the whole with a sloth's  
skull a-top,  
Found dead i' the woods, too hard for one  
to kill.  
No use at all i' the work, for work's sole  
sake;  
'Shall some day knock it down again: so  
He.  
'Saith he is terrible: watch His feats in  
proof!  
One hurricane will spoil six good months'  
hope.  
He hath a spite against me, that I know,  
Just as He favours Prosper, who knows  
why?  
So it is, all the same, as well I find.  
'Wove wattles half the winter, fenced them  
firm  
With stone and stake to stop she-tortoises  
Crawling to lay their eggs here: well, one  
wave,  
Feeling the foot of Him upon its neck,  
Gaped as a snake does, lolled out its large  
tongue,  
And licked the whole labour flat: so much  
for spite.  
'Saw a ball flame down late (yonder it lies)

Where, half an hour before, I slept i' the shade:  
 Often they scatter sparkles: there is force!  
 'Dug up a newt he may have envied once  
 And turned to stone, shut up inside a stone.  
 Please Him and hinder this? — What Prosper does?  
 Aha, if He would tell me how! Not He!  
 There is the sport: discover how or die!  
 All need not die, for of the things o' the isle  
 Some flee afar, some dive, some run up trees;  
 Those at His mercy,— why, they please Him most  
 When . . . when . . . well, never try the same way twice!  
 Repeat what act has pleased, He may grow wroth.  
 You must not know His ways, and play Him off,  
 Sure of the issue. 'Doth the like himself:  
 'Spareth a squirrel that it nothing fears  
 But steals the nut from underneath my thumb,  
 And when I threat, bites stoutly in defence:  
 'Spareth an urchin that, contrariwise,  
 Curls up into a ball, pretending death  
 For fright at my approach: the two ways please.  
 But what would move my choler more than this,  
 That either creature counted on its life  
 To-morrow and next day and all days to come,  
 Saying forsooth in the inmost of its heart,  
 'Because he did so yesterday with me,  
 And otherwise with such another brute,  
 So must he do henceforth and always.' —  
 Aye?  
 'Would teach the reasoning couple what 'must' means!  
 'Doth as he likes, or wherefore Lord? So He.  
 'Conceiveth all things will continue thus,  
 And we shall have to live in fear of Him  
 So long as He lives, keeps His strength: no change,  
 If He have done His best, make no new world  
 To please Him more, so leave off watching this,—  
 If He surprise not even the Quiet's self  
 Some strange day, — or, suppose, grow into it  
 As grubs grow butterflies: else, here are we,  
 And there is He, and nowhere help at all.  
 'Believeth with the life, the pain shall stop.  
 His dam held different, that after death  
 He both plagued enemies and feasted friends:

Idly! He doth His worst in this our life,  
 Giving just respite lest we die through pain,  
 Saving last pain for worst, — with which, an end.  
 Meanwhile the best way to escape His ire  
 Is, not to seem too happy. Sees, himself,  
 Yonder two flies, with purple films and pink,  
 Bask on the pompon-bell above: kills both.  
 'Sees two black painful beetles roll their ball  
 On head and tail as if to save their lives:  
 Moves them the stick away they strive to clear.  
 Even so, 'would have Him misconceive,  
 suppose  
 This Caliban strives hard and ails no less,  
 And always, above all else, envies Him.  
 Wherefore he mainly dances on dark nights,  
 Moans in the sun, gets under holes to laugh,  
 And never speaks his mind save housed as now:  
 Outside, 'groans, curses. If He caught me here,  
 O'erheard this speech, and asked 'What chucklest at?'  
 'Would, to appease Him, cut a finger off,  
 Or of my three kid yearlings burn the best,  
 Or let the toothsome apples rot on tree,  
 Or push my tame beast for the orc to taste:  
 While myself lit a fire, and made a song  
 And sung it, '*What I hate, be consecrate  
 To celebrate Thee and Thy state, no mate  
 For Thee; what see for envy in poor me?*'  
 Hoping the while, since evils sometimes mend,  
 Warts rub away, and sores are cured with slime,  
 That some strange day, will either the Quiet catch  
 And conquer Setebos, or likelier He Decrepit may doze, doze, as good as die.

---

[What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!  
 Crickets stop hissing; not a bird — or, yes,  
 There scuds His raven that hath told Him all!  
 It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind  
 Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,  
 And fast invading fires begin! White blaze —  
 A tree's head snaps — and there, there, there,  
 His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!  
 Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!  
 'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,

Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month  
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!]

CONFESIONS *Brownings*

[1864.]

WHAT is he buzzing in my ears?  
Now that I come to die,  
Do I view the world as a vale of tears?  
Ah, reverend sir, not I!

What I viewed there once, what I view again  
Where the physic bottles stand  
On the table's edge,—is a suburb lane,  
With a wall to my bedside hand.

That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,  
From a house you could descry  
O'er the garden-wall: is the curtain blue  
Or green to a healthy eye?

To mine, it serves for the old June weather  
Blue above lane and wall;  
And that farthest bottle labelled 'Ether'  
Is the house o'er-topping all.

At a terrace, somewhat near its stopper,  
There watched for me, one June,  
A girl: I know, sir, it's improper,  
My poor mind's out of tune.

Only, there was a way . . . you crept  
Close by the side, to dodge  
Eyes in the house, two eyes except:  
They styled their house 'The Lodge.'

What right had a lounger up their lane?  
But, by creeping very close,  
With the good wall's help,—their eyes  
might strain  
And stretch themselves to Oes,

Yet never catch her and me together,  
As she left the attic, there,  
By the rim of the bottle labelled 'Ether,'  
And stole from stair to stair,

And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas,  
We loved, sir—used to meet:  
How sad and bad and mad it was—  
But then, how it was sweet!

PROSPICE *After Mrs. B.  
de la*

[1864.]

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts  
denote

I am nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the  
storm,  
The post of the foe;

*down the road  
against death*

Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,

Yet the strong man must go:  
For the journey is done and the summit attained,

And the barriers fall,  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,

The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,

The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes,

and forbore,

And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers

The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears

Of pain, darkness and cold.  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,

The black minute's at end,  
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,

Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
Shall change, shall become first a peace,

then a joy,  
Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,

And with God be the rest!

## YOUTH AND ART

[1864.]

It once might have been, once only:  
We lodged in a street together,  
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,  
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

Your trade was with sticks and clay,  
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,  
Then laughed 'They will see some day  
Smith made, and Gibson demolished.'

My business was song, song, song;  
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered,  
'Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,  
And Grisi's existence embittered!'

I earned no more by a warble  
Than you by a sketch in plaster;  
You wanted a piece of marble,  
I needed a music-master.

We studied hard in our styles,  
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,  
For air, looked out on the tiles,  
For fun, watched each other's windows.

You lounged, like a boy of the South,  
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;  
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth  
With fingers the clay adhered to.

And I—soon managed to find  
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,  
Was forced to put up a blind  
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

No harm! It was not my fault  
If you never turned your eye's tail up,  
As I shook upon E *in alt,*  
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

For spring bade the sparrows pair,  
And the boys and girls gave guesses,  
And stalls in our street looked rare  
With bulrush and watercresses.

Why did not you pinch a flower  
In a pellet of clay and fling it?  
Why did not I put a power  
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

I did look, sharp as a lynx,  
(And yet the memory rankles)  
When models arrived, some minx  
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

But I think I gave you as good!  
That foreign fellow,—who can know  
How she pays, in a playful mood,  
For his tuning her that piano?

Could you say so, and never say  
‘Suppose we join hands and fortunes,  
And I fetch her from over the way,  
Her, piano, and long tunes and short  
tunes?’

No, no: you would not be rash,  
Nor I rasher and something over:  
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,  
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

But you meet the Prince at the Board,  
I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,  
I've married a rich old lord,  
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

Each life's unfulfilled, you see;  
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:  
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,  
Starved, feasted, despairs, — been happy.

And nobody calls you a dunce,  
And people suppose me clever:  
This could but have happened once,  
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

### A LIKENESS

[1864.]

SOME people hang portraits up  
In a room where they dine or sup:  
And the wife clinks tea-things under,  
And her cousin, he stirs his cup,  
Asks, ‘Who was the lady, I wonder?’  
‘Tis a daub John bought at a sale,’

Quoth the wife, — looks black as thunder:  
‘What a shade beneath her nose!  
Snuff-taking, I suppose,—’  
Adds the cousin, while John's corns ail.

Or else, there's no wife in the case,  
But the portrait's queen of the place,  
Alone mid the other spoils  
Of youth,—masks, gloves and foils,  
And pipe-sticks, rose, cherry-tree, jasmine,  
And the long whip, the tandem-lasher,  
And the cast from a fist ('not, alas! mine,  
But my master's, the Tipton Slasher'),  
And the cards where pistol-balls mark  
ace,

And a satin shoe used for cigar-case,  
And the chamois-horns ('shot in the  
Chablaïs')

And prints — Rarey drumming on Cruiser,  
And Sayers, our champion, the bruiser,  
And the little edition of Rabelais:  
Where a friend, with both hands in his  
pockets,

May saunter up close to examine it,  
And remark a good deal of Jane Lamb  
in it,

But the eyes are half out of their sockets;  
That hair's not so bad, where the gloss  
is,

But they've made the girl's nose a proboscis:

Jane Lamb, that we danced with at Vichy!  
What, is not she Jane? Then, who is she?

All that I own is a print,  
An etching, a mezzotint;  
'Tis a study, a fancy, a fiction,  
Yet a fact (take my conviction)  
Because it has more than a hint  
Of a certain face, I never  
Saw elsewhere touch or trace of  
In women I've seen the face of:  
Just an etching, and, so far, clever.  
I keep my prints, an imbroglio,  
Fifty in one portfolio.

When somebody tries my claret,  
We turn round chairs to the fire,  
Chirp over days in a garret,  
Chuckle o'er increase of salary,  
Taste the good fruits of our leisure,  
Talk about pencil and lyre,  
And the National Portrait Gallery:  
Then I exhibit my treasure.

After we've turned over twenty,  
And the debt of wonder my crony owes  
Is paid to my Marc Antonios,  
He stops me — 'Festina lente!'

What's that sweet thing there, the etching?  
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,  
How my cheeks grow red as tomatoes,  
How my heart leaps! But hearts, after  
leaps, ache.

'By the by, you must take, for a keepsake,  
That other, you praised, of Volpato's.'

The fool! would he try a flight further and  
say

He never saw, never before to-day,  
What was able to take his breath away,  
A face to lose youth for, to occupy age  
With the dream of, meet death with,—  
why, I'll not engage

But that, half in a rapture and half in a  
rage,

I should toss him the thing's self — 'Tis  
only a duplicate,  
A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!

#### APPARENT FAILURE

'We shall soon lose a celebrated building.'

*Paris Newspaper*

[1864.]

No, FOR I'll save it! Seven years since,  
I passed through Paris, stopped a day  
To see the baptism of your Prince;

Saw, made my bow, and went my way:  
Walking the heat and headache off,

I took the Seine-side, you surmise,  
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,  
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,  
So sauntered till — what met my eyes?

Only the Doric little Morgue!

The dead-house where you show your  
drowned:

Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the  
Sorgue,

Your Morgue has made the Seine re-  
nowned.

One pays one's debt in such a case;

I plucked up heart and entered, —  
stalked,

Keeping a tolerable face

Compared with some whose cheeks were  
chalked:

Let them! No Briton's to be balked!

First came the silent gazers; next,  
A screen of glass, we're thankful for;

Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,  
The three men who did most abhor

Their life in Paris yesterday,

So killed themselves: and now, enthroned  
Each on his copper couch, they lay

Fronting me, waiting to be owned.

I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

Poor men, God made, and all for that!  
The reverence struck me; o'er each head

Religiously was hung its hat,

Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,

Sacred from touch: each had his berth,

His bounds, his proper place of rest,  
Who last night tenanted on earth

Some arch, where twelve such slept  
abreast, —

Unless the plain asphalte seemed best.

How did it happen, my poor boy?

You wanted to be Bonaparte  
And have the Tuilleries for toy,

And could not, so it broke your heart?

You, old one by his side, I judge,

Were, red as blood, a socialist,

A leveller! Does the Empire grudge

You've gained what no Republic missed?

Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

And this — why, he was red in vain,

Or black, — poor fellow that is blue!

What fancy was it, turned your brain?

Oh, women were the prize for you!

Money gets women, cards and dice

Get money, and ill luck gets just

The copper couch and one clear nice

Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,

The right thing to extinguish lust!

It's wiser being good than bad;

It's safer being meek than fierce:

It's fitter being sane than mad.

My own hope is, a sun will pierce

The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;

That, after Last, returns the First,

Though a wide compass round be fetched:

That what began best, can't end worst,

Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

#### O LYRIC LOVE

[FROM THE RING AND THE BOOK, END OF  
BOOK I.]

[1868.]

O LYRIC Love, half angel and half bird,  
And all a wonder and a wild desire, —  
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,  
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,  
And sang a kindred soul out to his face, —  
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart —  
When the first summons from the dark-  
ling earth

Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched  
their blue,

And bared them of the glory — to drop  
down,

To toil for man, to suffer or to die. —  
This is the same voice: can thy soul know  
change?

Hail then, and harken from the realms of  
help!

Never may I commence my song, my due  
To God who best taught song by gift of  
thee,

Except with bent head and beseeching  
hand —

That still, despite the distance and the dark,  
What was, again may be; some interchange  
Of grace, some splendor once thy very  
thought,

Some benediction anciently thy smile:

— Never conclude, but raising hand and  
head

Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet  
yearn  
For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,  
Their utmost up and on,—so blessing back  
In those thy realms of help, that heaven  
thy home,  
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face  
makes proud,  
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot  
may fall!

## AMPHIBIAN

[PROLOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR]

[1872.]

THE fancy I had to-day,  
Fancy which turned a fear!  
I swam far out in the bay,  
Since waves laughed warm and clear.

I lay and looked at the sun,  
The noon-sun looked at me:  
Between us two, no one  
Live creature, that I could see.

Yes! There came floating by  
Me, who lay floating too,  
Such a strange butterfly!  
Creature as dear as new:

Because the membraned wings  
So wonderful, so wide,  
So sun-suffused, were things  
Like soul and naught beside.

A handbreadth overhead!  
All of the sea my own,  
It owned the sky instead;  
Both of us were alone.

I never shall join its flight,  
For, naught buoys flesh in air.  
If it touch the sea—good night!  
Death sure and swift waits there.

Can the insect feel the better  
For watching the uncouth play  
Of limbs that slip the fetter,  
Pretend as they were not clay?

Undoubtedly I rejoice  
That the air comports so well  
With a creature which had the choice  
Of the land once. Who can tell?

What if a certain soul  
Which early slipped its sheath,  
And has for its home the whole  
Of heaven, thus look beneath,

Thus watch one who, in the world,  
Both lives and likes life's way,  
Nor wishes the wings unfurled  
That sleep in the worm, they say?

But sometimes when the weather  
Is blue, and warm waves tempt  
To free one's self of tether,  
And try a life exempt

From worldly noise and dust,  
In the sphere which overbrims  
With passion and thought,—why, just  
Unable to fly, one swims!

By passion and thought upborne,  
One smiles to one's self—"They fare  
Scarce better, they need not scorn  
Our sea, who live in the air!"

Emancipate through passion  
And thought, with sea for sky,  
We substitute, in a fashion,  
For heaven—poetry:

Which sea, to all intent,  
Gives flesh such noon-disport  
As a finer element  
Affords the spirit-sort.

Whatever they are, we seem:  
Imagine the thing they know;  
All deeds they do, we dream;  
Can heaven be else but so?

And meantime, yonder streak  
Meets the horizon's verge;  
That is the land, to seek  
If we tire or dread the surge:

Land the solid and safe—  
To welcome again (confess!)  
When, high and dry, we chafe  
The body, and don the dress.

Does she look, pity, wonder  
At one who mimics flight,  
Swims—heaven above, sea under,  
Yet always earth in sight?

## THE HOUSEHOLDER

[EPILOGUE TO FIFINE AT THE FAIR]

[1872.]

SAVAGE I was sitting in my house, late,  
alone:  
Dreary, weary with the long day's work:  
Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone:  
Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like  
a Turk;  
When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,  
Half a pang and all a rapture, there  
again were we!—  
"What, and is it really you again?" quoth  
I:  
"I again, what else did you expect?"  
quoth She.

"Never mind, hie away from this old house—  
Every crumbling brick embrowned with sin and shame!  
Quick, in its corners ere certain shapes arouse!  
Let them — every devil of the night — lay claim,  
Make and mend, or rap and rend, for me!  
Good-by!  
God be their guard from disturbance at their glee,  
Till, crash, comes down the carcass in a heap!" quoth I:  
"Nay, but there's a decency required!" quoth She.  
"Ah, but if you knew how time has dragged, days, nights!  
All the neighbor-talk with man and maid — such men!  
All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights:  
All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof: and then,  
All the fancies . . . Who were they had leave, dared try  
Darker arts that almost struck despair in me?  
If you knew but how I dwelt down here!" quoth I:  
"And was I so better off up there?" quoth She.

"Help and get it over! *Reunited to his wife*

(How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know?)

*Lies M. or N., departed from this life, Day the this or that, month and year the so and so.*

What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!

*Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?*

*Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!" quoth I:*

"I end with — Love is all, and Death is nought!" quoth She.

### MARTIN RELPH

*My grandfather says he remembers he saw, when a youngster long ago, On a bright May day, a strange old man, with a beard as white as snow, Stand on the hill outside our town like a monument of woe, And, striking his bare bald head the while, sob out the reason — so!*

If I last as long as Methuselah I shall never forgive myself:

But — God forgive me, that I pray, unhappy Martin Relph,

As coward, coward I call him — him, yes, him! Away from me! Get you behind the man I am now, you man that I used to be!

What can have sewed my mouth up, set me a-stare, all eyes, no tongue? People have urged, "You visit a scare too hard on a lad so young! You were taken aback poor boy," they urge, "no time to regain your wits: Besides it had maybe cost your life." Ay, there is the cap which fits!

So, cap me, the coward, — thus! No fear! A cuff on the brow does good: The feel of it hinders a worm inside which bores at the brain for food. See now, there certainly seems excuse: for a moment, I trust, dear friends, The fault was but folly, no fault of mine, or if mine, I have made amends!

For, every day that is first of May, on the hilltop, here stand I, Martin Relph, and I strike my brow, and publish the reason why, When there gathers a crowd to mock the fool. No fool, friends, since the bite Of a worm inside is worse to bear; pray God I have balked him quite!

I'll tell you. Certainly much excuse! It came of the way they cooped Us peasantry up in a ring just here, close huddling because tight-hooped By the red-coats round us villagers all: they meant we should see the sight And take the example,—see, not speak, for speech was the Captain's right.

"You clowns on the slope, beware!" cried he: "This woman about to die Gives by her fate fair warning to such acquaintance as play the spy. Henceforth who meddle with matters of state above them perhaps will learn That peasants should stick to their plough-tail, leave to the King the King's concern.

"Here's a quarrel that sets the land on fire, between King George and his foes: What call has a man of your kind — much less, a woman — to interpose? Yet you needs must be meddling, folk like you, not foes — so much the worse! The many and loyal should keep themselves unmixed with the few perverse.

"Is the counsel hard to follow? I gave it you plainly a month ago, And where was the good? The rebels have learned just all that they need to know.

Not a month since in we quietly marched:  
a week, and they had the news,  
From a list complete of our rank and  
file to a note of our caps and shoes.

"All about all we did and all we were doing  
and like to do!  
Only, I catch a letter by luck, and capture  
who wrote it, too.  
Some of you men look black enough, but  
the milk-white face demure  
Betokens the finger foul with ink: 'tis a  
woman who writes, be sure!

"Is it 'Dearie, how much I miss your  
mouth!—good natural stuff, she pens?  
Some sprinkle of that, for a blind, of  
course: with talk about cocks and hens,  
How 'robin has built on the apple-tree, and  
our creeper which came to grief  
Through the frost, we feared, is twining  
afresh round casement in famous leaf.'

"But all for a blind! She soon glides  
frank into 'Horrid the place is grown  
With Officers here and Privates there, no  
nook we may call our own:  
And Farmer Giles has a tribe to house,  
and lodging will be to seek  
For the second Company sure to come 'tis  
whispered) on Monday week."

"And so to the end of the chapter! There!  
The murder, you see, was out:  
Easy to guess how the change of mind in  
the rebels was brought about!  
Safe in the trap would they now lie snug,  
had treachery made no sign:  
But treachery meets a just reward, no matter  
if fools malign!

"That traitors had played us false, was  
proved—sent news which fell so pat:  
And the murder was out—this letter of  
love, the sender of this sent that!  
'T is an ugly job, though, all the same—  
a hateful, to have to deal  
With a case of the kind, when a woman's  
in fault: we soldiers need nerves of  
steel!"

"So, I gave her a chance, despatched post-haste a message to Vincent Parkes  
Whom she wrote to; easy to find he was,  
since one of the King's own clerks,  
Ay, kept by the King's own gold in the  
town close by where the rebels camp:  
A sort of lawyer, just the man to betray  
our sort—the scamp!"

"If her writing is simple and honest and  
only the lover-like stuff it looks,  
And if you yourself are a loyalist, nor  
down in the rebels' books,

Come quick,' said I, 'and in person prove  
you are each of you clear of crime,  
Or martial law must take its course: this  
day next week 's the time!'

"Next week is now: does he come? Not  
he! Clean gone, our clerk, in a trice!  
He has left his sweetheart here in the  
lurch: no need of a warning twice!  
His own neck free, but his partner's fast  
in the noose still, here she stands  
To pay for her fault. 'T is an ugly job:  
but soldiers obey commands.

"And hearken wherefore I make a speech!  
Should any acquaintance share  
The folly that led to the fault that is now  
to be punished, let fools beware!  
Look black, if you please, but keep hands  
white: and, above all else, keep wives—  
Or sweethearts or what they may be—from  
ink! Not a word now, on your lives!"

Black? but the Pit's own pitch was white  
to the Captain's face—the brute  
With the bloated cheeks and the bulgy nose  
and the bloodshot eyes to suit!  
He was muddled with wine, they say: more  
like, he was out of his wits with fear;  
He had but a handful of men, that 's  
true,—a riot might cost him dear.

And all that time stood Rosamund Page,  
with pinioned arms and face  
Bandaged about, on the turf marked out  
for the party's firing-place.  
I hope she was wholly with God: I hope  
'twas his angel stretched a hand  
To steady her so, like the shape of stone  
you see in our church-aisle stand.

I hope there was no vain fancy pierced the  
bandage to vex her eyes,  
No face within which she missed without,  
no questions and no replies—  
"Why did you leave me to die?"—"Because"  
. . . Oh, fiends, too soon you  
grin  
At merely a moment of hell, like that—such  
heaven as hell ended in!

Let mine end too! He gave the word, up  
went the guns in a line.  
Those heaped on the hill were blind as  
dumb,—for, of all eyes, only mine  
Looked over the heads of the foremost  
rank. Some fell on their knees in  
prayer,  
Some sank to the earth, but all shut eyes,  
with a sole exception there.

That was myself, who had stolen up last,  
had sidled behind the group:  
I am highest of all on the hill-top, there  
stand fixed while the others stoop!

From head to foot in a serpent's twine am  
I tightened: I touch ground?  
No more than a gibbet's rigid corpse which  
the fetters rust around!

Can I speak, can I breathe, can I burst—  
aught else but see, see, only see?  
And see I do—for there comes in sight—  
a man, it sure must be!—  
Who staggeringly, stumblingly rises, falls,  
rises, at random flings his weight  
On and on, anyhow onward—a man that's  
mad he arrives too late!

Else why does he wave a something white  
high-flourished above his head?  
Why does not he call, cry,—curse the fool!  
—why throw up his arms instead?  
O take this fist in your own face, fool!  
Why does not yourself shout "Stay!"  
Here 's a man comes rushing, might and  
main, with something he's mad to  
say?"

And a minute, only a moment, to have  
hell-fire boil up in your brain,  
And ere you can judge things right, choose  
heaven,—time 's over, repentance vain!  
They level: a volley, a smoke and the  
clearing of smoke: I see no more  
Of the man smoke hid, nor his frantic  
arms, nor the something white he bore.  
But stretched on the field, some half-mile  
off, is an object. Surely dumb,  
Deaf, blind were we struck, that nobody  
heard, not one of us saw him come!  
Has he fainted through fright? One may  
well believe! What is it he holds so  
fast?

Turn him over, examine the face! Hey-  
day! What, Vincent Parkes at last?  
Dead! dead as she, by the selfsame shot:  
one bullet has ended both,  
Her in the body and him in the soul. They  
laugh at our plighted troth.  
"Till death us do part?" Till death us do  
join past parting—that sounds like  
Betrothal indeed! O Vincent Parkes, what  
need has my fist to strike?

I helped you: thus were you dead and wed:  
one bound, and your soul reached hers!  
There is clenched in your hand the thing,  
signed, sealed, the paper which plain  
avers  
She is innocent, innocent, plain as print,  
with the King's Arms broad engraved:  
No one can hear, but if any one high on  
the hill can see, she's saved!

And torn his garb and bloody his lips with  
heart-break—plain it grew  
How the week's delay had been brought  
about: each guess at the end proved  
true.

It was hard to get at the folk in power:  
such waste of time! and then  
Such pleading and praying, with, all the  
while, his lamb in the lions' den!

And at length when he wrung their pardon  
out, no end to the stupid forms—  
The license and leave: I make no doubt—  
what wonder if passion warms  
The pulse in a man if you play with his  
heart?—he was something hasty in  
speech;  
Anyhow, none would quicken the work: he  
had to beseech, beseech!

And the thing once signed, sealed, safe in  
his grasp,—what followed but fresh  
delays?  
For the floods were out, he was forced to  
take such a roundabout of ways!  
And 't was "Halt there!" at every turn of  
the road, since he had to cross the  
thick  
Of the red-coats: what did they care for  
him and his "Quick, for God's sake,  
quick!"

Horse? but he had one: had it how long?  
till the first knave smirked "You brag  
Yourselves a friend of the King's? then lend  
to a King's friend here your nag!"  
Money to buy another? Why, piece by piece  
they plundered him still,  
With their "Wait you must,—no help: if  
aught can help you, a guinea will!"

And a borough there was—I forget the  
name—whose Mayor must have the  
bench  
Of Justices ranged to clear a doubt: for  
"Vincent," thinks he, sounds French!  
It well may have driven him daft, God  
knows! all man can certainly know  
Is—rushing and falling and rising, at last  
he arrived in a horror—so!

When a word, cry, gasp, would have res-  
cued both! Ay, bite me! The worm  
begins  
At his work once more. Had cowardice  
proved—that only—my sin of sins!  
Friends, look you here! Suppose . . .  
suppose . . . But mad I am, needs  
must be!

Judas the Damned would never have dared  
such a sin as I dream! For, see!

Suppose I had sneakingly loved her myself,  
my wretched self, and dreamed  
In the heart of me "She were better dead  
than happy and his!"—while gleamed  
A light from hell as I spied the pair in a  
perfectest embrace,  
He the saviour and she the saved,—bliss  
born of the very murder-place!

Now fast I was forced to cease. Call me  
old and weary, but nothing comes  
near a old man and few as he knows.  
I was over at "Floyd's" three  
times last week, about a week, and  
had been shadow of assistance still.  
— a week is now past. I lost my  
Partner. — now I know I am old  
and feeble — now I am "faded-yellow" to  
the world over, and nothing more.  
The atmosphere was thin, like air in the  
air, and dead leaves.  
The world is a long narrow road to  
where a friend can "travel" —  
to where I wanted, and now I am walking  
the road to death. — now.

### ALICE LILLY, AND FIVE YEAR

Now day is thundered and blottedted,  
now women have blottedted.  
Now is new shoes, broken ruined, trans-  
muted.  
It is set off by men who are broken  
and "blotted" good and — "I need no  
more"  
A message in the "air."  
Now this. "Do you want to marriage  
I met your son with marriage"  
is the name of the woman for my Son.  
"I do not. I desire not to marry  
The man from you and with a kiss — a  
kiss  
He left — and with one kiss."

Now this. "We come to be married  
The world is wide and broad  
To Paradise and "gates sealed" ended  
me.

Now, as I walked under the  
old oak boughs — we are  
not far from where Bell's gate."

I passed a "labor and leisure"  
I passed with a "sigh"  
I saw smoke and saw that the sky was  
clear.  
Then another "labor and leisure" as  
I saw  
I saw "labor and leisure" at the market.  
Then a "labor and leisure" as.

### NEVER SPAN TIME AND THE PLACE 1888

Never the time nor the place  
nor the place nor the place  
This year — now and then  
The May — ever there whether  
Where a we travel, now and

In a dream that led me face meets  
mine.

But the house is narrow, the place is  
narrow.

Never surface, sun and wind combine  
With a narrow air, so I strive to speak.

With a wide eye in my blushing cheek  
With a窄处 that marks each word, each

silence of and repentence.

"Good bye from the walking man."

Do I need no Past?

Thus live and past

The world is the Future told I think?

The earth is lost in space small and

farfrom the ways of May is herself

indeed.

My narrow it seems the house must be  
houses are the homes and strangers

we —

Oh, green, pale, warm, sleepy I and she,

— I and she

### SYRACUSE BOONUM

1889

With the broad and the broad of the year  
is the bag of the bee

With the bright and wealth of the sun  
is the heart of the gem

in the form of the year of the shade and  
the gloom of the sea

Bright and broad, green and stone —  
golden wealth and — now far above  
them —

Great has' brighter than green

Green, her color has' green —

Brightest pink, purple dust in the sun  
— of green for the

in the form of the gem.

### A PEARL & A GIRL

1889

A pointed tree with a single cone,

The cedar tree in form of green

With the green world that grows —

— of green a green tree the first green — a  
tree in the sun and green on Earth on

the water and earth, but white and pale  
Therefrom the power of a pearl.

A woman who is the tree that car  
ries life, the world where worthy

comes

Not in the world — nor and away

From her — but in the world in place

of green and pale — in a measured path —

Through the sun in a gem.

## EPILOGUE

[1884.]

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,  
When you set your fancies free.  
Will they pass to where — by death, fools think, impounded —  
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom  
you loved so.  
— Pray me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!  
What had I on earth to do  
With the shothful, with the mawkish, the  
unmanly?  
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless. Did I  
dwell  
— Being — who?

One who never turned his back but marched  
breast forward.  
Never doubted clouds would break.  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted,  
wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight  
better.

Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's  
work-time  
Greet the unseen with a cheer!  
Bid him forward, breast and back as either  
should be.  
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed — fight  
on, fare ever  
There as here!"

## PIPPA PASSES

## A DRAMA

[1861.]

NEW-YEAR'S DAY AT ASOLE IN THE DOLCE-SAX. — A short, moist, dark, slender  
A girl, Pippa, from the end-music  
strumming out of tune.

## DAY!

Faster and more fast,  
O'er night's dim, day破 at last.  
Bells, pure gold, o'er the cloud-cup's brim  
Where spouting and suppressed it lay  
For not a fresh lake touched the sun  
Of wonder gap in the solid sky  
Of the eastern cloud, an hour away.  
But forth one waverlet then another curled  
Till the whole sunrise, not to be compressed,  
Rose, reddened, and its swelling breast  
Flattered in bounds grew gold, then even-  
flowed the world.

Oh, Day, if I consider a variety of them  
A mate of my twelve hours' measure,  
The least of thy gaudy or glances

Be they grants thou art bound to, or gifts  
above measure.

One of thy choices, or one of thy chances  
Be they tasks God imposed thee, or frears  
in thy pleasure! —

My Day, if I consider such labour or  
leisure,

Then shame fall on Asolo, mark it on me!

The long blue solemn hours serenely flowing  
Whence earth, we feel, gets steady help  
and good —

The brief sunshiny-moments, coming going  
In which each turns from work to game,  
some need —  
All shall be true! But thou must treat me  
not

As the prosperous are treated, those who  
live

At hand here, and on the higher lot,  
In readiness to take what thou will give,  
And free to let alone what thou doest,  
For Day thy bairly is there to give  
Me, who am only Pippa — creature & ser-  
vant

Cast off last night, will come again to-  
morrow

Whether it then prove gentle, I say — then

Sufficient strength of thee for new year's  
return

All other men and women that this earth  
Belongs to, who all have alike possess  
More general plenty than pangs, & less  
Less more joy one way, &愁少 less  
These are my simple day God loves to leave  
What were all earth else with a foot or  
heavens

Safe light that helps me through the year  
the sun's

The now! Take Asolo's New Year's  
Ours —

And let the morning rain on that expect  
bright Daughtry Orlina, she were bound  
Her Solilo's marriage! All the while the  
year

Bells throbbed on her shouldhouse windows-

pane  
He will but cross the closer, broof the more  
water

Yes to her cheek, how should she mind  
the spray!

And mounting fast, & suddenly shot a glance  
O'er lakes and flocks, what can birds and  
grouses

Say in their doot solace? It is their  
one safe day

And while they leave church and go home  
their way

Not a clanging hand within each doorway  
would be  
Surrounded and pleasant together spite of  
thee

Then, for another trial, obscure thy eve  
With mist, will Luigi and his mother  
grieve—  
The lady and her child, unmatched, for-  
sooth,  
She in her age, as Luigi in his youth,  
For true content? The cheerful town,  
warm, close,  
And safe, the sooner that thou art morose,  
Receives them! And yet once again, out-  
break  
In storm at night on Monsignor they make  
Such stir about—whom they expect from  
Rome  
To visit Asolo, his brothers' home,  
And say here masses proper to release  
A soul from pain—what storm dares hurt  
his peace?  
Calm would he pray, with his own thoughts  
to ward  
Thy thunder off, nor want the angels' guard.  
But Pippa—just one such mischance would  
spoil  
Her day that lightens the next twelve-  
month's toil  
At wearisome silk-winding, coil on coil!  
And here I let time slip for nought!  
Aha, you foolhardy sunbeam, caught  
With a single splash from my ewer!  
You that would mock the best pursuer,  
Was my basin overdeep?  
One splash of water ruins you asleep,  
And up, up, fleet your brilliant bits  
Wheeling and counterwheeling,  
Reeling, broken beyond healing—  
Now grow together on the ceiling!  
That will task your wits.  
Whoever it was quenched fire first, hoped  
to see  
Morsel after morsel flee  
As merrily, as giddily—  
Meantime, what lights my sunbeam on?  
Where settles by degrees the radiant crip-  
ple?  
Oh, is it surely blown, my martagon?  
New-blown and ruddy as Saint Agnes'  
nipple,  
Plump as the flesh-bunch on some Turk  
bird's poll!  
Be sure if corals, branching 'neath the rip-  
ple  
Of ocean, bud there, fairies watch unroll  
Such turban-flowers; I say, such lamps  
disperse  
Thick red flame through that dusk green  
universe!  
I am queen of thee, floweret;  
And each fleshy blossom  
Preserve I not—safer  
Than leaves that embower it,  
Or shells that embosom—  
From weevil and chafer?

Laugh through my pane, then; solicit the  
bee;  
Gibe him, be sure; and, in midst of thy  
glee,  
Love thy queen, worship me!  
Worship whom else? For am I not, this  
day,  
Whate'er I please? What shall I please  
to-day?  
My morning, noon, eve, night—how spend  
my day?  
To-morrow I must be Pippa who winds  
silk,  
The whole year round, to earn just bread  
and milk:  
But, this one day, I have leave to go,  
And play out my fancy's fullest games;  
I may fancy all day—and it shall be so—  
That I taste the pleasures, am called by the  
names  
Of the Happiest Four in our Asolo!  
See! Up the hill-side yonder, through the  
morning,  
Some one shall love me, as the world calls  
love:  
I am no less than Ottima, take warning!  
The gardens, and the great stone house  
above,  
And other house for shrubs, all glass in  
front,  
Are mine; where Sebald steals, as he is  
wont,  
To court me, while old Luca yet reposes;  
And therefore, till the shrub-house door  
uncloses,  
I—what now?—give abundant cause for  
prate  
About me—Ottima, I mean—of late,  
Too bold, too confident she'll still face down  
The spitefullest of talkers in our town—  
How we talk in the little town below!  
But love, love, love—there's better love,  
I know!  
This foolish love was only Day's first  
offer;  
I choose my next love to defy the scoffer:  
For do not our Bride and Bridegroom sally  
Out of Possagno church at noon?  
Their house looks over Orcana valley—  
Why should I not be the bride as soon  
As Ottima? For I saw, beside,  
Arrive last night that little bride—  
Saw, if you call it seeing her, one flash  
Of the pale, snow-pure cheek and black  
bright tresses,  
Blacker than all except the black eyelash;  
I wonder she contrives those lids no  
dresses!  
So strict was she, the veil  
Should cover close her pale

Pure cheeks — a bride to look at and scarce touch,  
 Scarce touch, remember, Jules! — for are not such  
 Used to be tended, flower-like, every feature,  
 As if one's breath would fray the lily of a creature?  
 A soft and easy life these ladies lead!  
 Whiteness in us were wonderful indeed.  
 Oh, save that brow its virgin dimness,  
 Keep that foot its lady primness,  
 Let those ankles never swerve  
 From their exquisite reserve,  
 Yet have to trip along the streets like me,  
 All but naked to the knee!  
 How will she ever grant her Jules a bliss  
 So startling as her real first infant kiss?  
 Oh, no — not envy, this!  
 Not envy, sure! — for if you gave me  
 Leave to take or to refuse,  
 In earnest, do you think I'd choose  
 That sort of new love to enslave me?  
 Mine should have lapped me round from  
 the beginning,  
 As little fear of losing it as winning;  
 Lovers grow cold, men learn to hate their wives,  
 And only parents' love can last our lives.  
 At eve the Son and Mother, gentle pair,  
 Commune inside our turret; what prevents  
 My being Luigi? While that mossy lair  
 Of lizards through the winter-time, is stirred  
 With each to each imparting sweet intents  
 For this new year, as brooding bird to bird  
 (For I observe of late, the evening walk  
 Of Luigi and his mother always ends  
 Inside our ruined turret, where they talk,  
 Calmer than lovers, yet more kind than friends),  
 Let me be cared about, kept out of harm,  
 And schemed for, safe in love as with a charm;  
 Let me be Luigi! — If I only knew  
 What was my mother's face — my father, too!  
 Nay, if you come to that, best love of all  
 Is God's; then why not have God's love  
 befall  
 Myself as, in the palace by the Dome,  
 Monsignor? — who to-night will bless the home  
 Of his dead brother; and God will bless in turn  
 That heart which beats, those eyes which mildly burn  
 With love for all men! I, to-night at least,  
 Would be that holy and beloved priest.  
 Now wait! — even I already seem to share  
 In God's love: what does New-Year's hymn declare?  
 What other meaning do these verses bear?

*All service ranks the same with God.  
 If now, as formerly he trod  
 Paradise, his presence fills  
 Our earth, each only as God wills  
 Can work — God's puppets, best and worst,  
 Are we; there is no last nor first.*

*Say not 'a small event!' Why 'small?'  
 Costs it more pain that this ye call  
 A 'great event' should come to pass,  
 Than that? Untwine me from the mass  
 Of deeds which make up life one deed  
 Power shall fall short in or exceed!*

And more of it and more of it! — oh, yes—  
 I will pass each, and see their happiness,  
 And envy none — being just as great, no doubt,  
 Useful to men, and dear to God, as they!  
 A pretty thing to care about  
 So mightily, this single holiday!  
 But let the sun shine! Wherefore repine?  
 With thee to lead me, O Day of mine,  
 Down the grass-path gray with dew,  
 Under the pine-wood blind with boughs,  
 Where the swallow never flew  
 Nor yet cicala dared carouse —  
 No, dared carouse!

[She enters the street.

### I. — MORNING

*Up the Hill-side, inside the Shrub-house.  
 LUCA'S Wife, OTTIMA, and her Paramour, the German SEBALD.*

*Sebald [sings.]*

*Let the watching lids wink!  
 Day's a-blaze with eyes, think —  
 Deep into the night, drink!*

*Ottima. Night? Such may be your Rhineland nights, perhaps; But this blood-red beam through the shutter's chink —*

*We call such light the morning's: let us see!*

*Mind how you grope your way, though!  
 How these tall  
 Naked geraniums straggle! Push the lattice*

*Behind that frame! — Nay, do I bid you? — Sebald,*

*It shakes the dust down on me! Why, of course*

*The slide-bolt catches. — Well, are you content,*

*Or must I find you something else to spoil?  
 Kiss and be friends, my Sebald! Is it full morning?*

*Oh, don't speak then!*

*Sebald. Ay, thus it used to be!  
 Ever your house was, I remember, shut Till midday; I observed that, as I strolled*

On mornings thro' the vale here: country girls.

Were noisy, washing garments in the brook,  
Hinds drove the slow white oxen up the hills;

But no, your house was mute, would ope no eye!

And wisely; you were plotting one thing there,

Nature another outside. I looked up—  
Rough white wood shutters, rusty iron bars,  
Silent as death, blind in a flood of light.  
Oh, I remember!—and the peasants laughed  
And said, 'The old man sleeps with the young wife!'

This house was his, this chair, this window—his!

*Ottima.* Ah, the clear morning! I can see Saint Mark's;

That black streak is the belfry. Stop: Vicenza

Should lie—there's Padua, plain enough, that blue!

Look o'er my shoulder, follow my finger!

*Sebald.* Morning?  
It seems to me a night with a sun added.

Where's dew, where's freshness? That bruised plant, I bruised

In getting thro' the lattice yester-eve,  
Droops as it did. See, here's my elbow's mark

I' the dust o' the sill.

*Ottima.* Oh, shut the lattice, pray!  
*Sebald.* Let me lean out. I cannot scent blood here,

Foul as the morn may be.

There, shut the world out!  
How do you feel now, Ottima? There, curse

The world, and all outside! Let us throw off

This mask: how do you bear yourself?  
Let's out

With all of it!

*Ottima.* Best never speak of it.

*Sebald.* Best speak again and yet again of it,

Till words cease to be more than words.

'His blood,'

For instance—let those two words mean 'His blood'

And nothing more. Notice, I'll say them now,

'His blood.'

*Ottima.* Assuredly if I repented  
The deed—

*Sebald.* Repent? who should repent, or why?

What puts that in your head? Did I once say

That I repented?

*Ottima.* No, I said the deed—

*Sebald.* 'The deed' and 'the event'—just now it was

'Our passion's fruit'—the devil take such cant!

Say, once and always, Luca was a witto!, I am his cut-throat, you are—

*Ottima.* Here's the wine;  
I brought it when we left the house above,

And glasses too—wine of both sorts.  
Black? white then?

*Sebald.* But am not I his cut-throat?  
What are you?

*Ottima.* There trudges on his business from the Duomo

Benet the Capuchin, with his brown hood And bare feet—always in one place at church,

Close under the stone wall by the south entry;

I used to take him for a brown cold piece Of the wall's self, as out of it he rose To let me pass—at first, I say, I used—Now, so has that dumb figure fastened on me,

I rather should account the plastered wall A piece of him, so chilly does it strike.

This, Sebald?

*Sebald.* No, the white wine—the white wine!

Well, Ottima, I promised no new year Should rise on us the ancient shameful way,

Nor does it rise: pour on! To your black eyes!

Do you remember last damned New-Year's day?

*Ottima.* You brought those foreign prints. We looked at them Over the wine and fruit. I had to scheme To get him from the fire. Nothing but saying

His own set wants the proof-mark, roused him up

To hunt them out.

*Sebald.* Hark you, Ottima, One thing's to guard against. We'll not make much

One of the other—that is, not make more Parade of warmth, childish officious coil, Than yesterday—as if, sweet, I supposed Proof upon proof were needed now, now first,

To show I love you—yes, still love you—love you

In spite of Luca and what's come to him—Sure sign we had him ever in our thoughts, White sneering old reproachful face and all!

We'll even quarrel, love, at times, as if We still could lose each other, were not tied

By this—conceive you?

*Ottima.* Love!  
*Sebald.* Not tied so sure!

Because tho' I was wrought upon, have struck

His insolence back into him—am I  
So surely yours?—therefore, forever  
yours?

*Ottima.* Love, to be wise (one counsel  
pays another),  
Should we have—months ago, when first  
we loved,  
For instance that May morning we two  
stole  
Under the green ascent of sycamores—  
If we had come upon a thing like that  
Suddenly—

*Sebald.* 'A thing'—there again—'a  
thing!'

*Ottima.* Then, Venus' body, had we come  
upon

My husband Luca Gaddi's murdered corpse  
Within there, at his couch-foot, covered  
close—

Would you have pored upon it? Why  
persist

In poring now upon it? For 't is here  
As much as there in the deserted house—  
You cannot rid your eyes of it. For me,  
Now he is dead I hate him worse; I hate—  
Dare you stay here? I would go back and  
hold

His two dead hands, and say, 'I hate you  
worse,

Luca, than'—

*Sebald.* Off, off—take your hands off  
mine!

'T is the hot evening—off! oh, morning, is  
it?

*Ottima.* There's one thing must be done  
—you know what thing.

Come in and help to carry. We may sleep  
Anywhere in the whole wide house to-night.

*Sebald.* What would come, think you, if  
we let him lie

Just as he is? Let him lie there until  
The angels take him! He is turned by  
this

Off from his face beside, as you will see.

*Ottima.* This dusty pane might serve for  
looking-glass.

Three, four—four gray hairs! Is it so you  
said

A plait of hair should wave across my  
neck?

No—this way.

*Sebald.* Ottima, I would give your  
neck,

Each splendid shoulder, both those breasts  
of yours,

That this were undone! Killing! Kill the  
world

So Luca lives again!—ay, lives to sputter  
His fulsome dotage on you—yes, and  
feign

Surprise that I return at eve to sup,  
When all the morning I was loitering  
here—

Bid me dispatch my business and begone.  
I would—

*Ottima.* See!

*Sebald.* No, I 'll finish! Do you think  
I fear to speak the bare truth once for  
all?

All we have talked of is, at bottom, fine  
To suffer; there 's a recompense in guilt;  
One must be venturous and fortunate:  
What is one young for, else? In age we 'll  
sigh

O'er the wild, reckless, wicked days flown  
over;

Still we have lived: the vice was in its  
place.

But to have eaten Luca's bread, have worn  
His clothes, have felt his money swell my  
purse—

Do lovers in romances sin that way?  
Why, I was starving when I used to call  
And teach you music, starving while you  
plucked me  
These flowers to smell!

*Ottima.* My poor lost friend!

*Sebald.* He gave me  
Life, nothing less; what if he did reproach  
My perfidy, and threaten, and do more—  
Had he no right? What was to wonder  
at?

He sat by us at table quietly—  
Why must you lean across till our cheeks  
touch'd?

Could he do less than make pretence to  
strike?

'T is not the crime's sake—I 'd commit  
ten crimes

Greater, to have this crime wiped out,  
undone!

And you—O, how feel you? feel you for  
me?

*Ottima.* Well then, I love you better  
now than ever,  
And best—look at me while I speak to  
you—

Best for the crime; nor do I grieve, in  
truth,

This mask, this simulated ignorance,  
This affectation of simplicity,  
Falls off our crime; this naked crime of  
ours

May not, now, be looked over—look it  
down!

Great? let it be great; but the joys it  
brought,

Pay they or no its price? Come: they  
or it!

Speak not! The past, would you give up  
the past

Such as it is, pleasure and crime together?  
Give up that noon I owned my love for  
you?

The garden's silence! even the single bee  
Persisting in his toil suddenly stopped,  
And where he hid you only could surmise

By some campanula's chalice set a-swing:  
Who stammered, 'Yes, I love you'?  
And when I ventured to receive you here,  
Made you steal hither in the mornings —  
*Sebald.* When

I used to look up 'neath the shrub-house  
here,  
Till the red fire on its glazed windows  
spread  
To a yellow haze?

*Ottima.* Ah — my sign was, the sun  
Inflamed the sere side of yon chestnut-  
tree

Nipped by the first frost,

*Sebald.* You would always laugh  
At my wet boots: I had to stride thro' grass  
Over my ankles.

*Ottima.* Then our crowning night!

*Sebald.* The July night?

*Ottima.* The day of it too, Sebald!  
When heaven's pillars seemed o'erbowed  
with heat,  
Its black-blue canopy suffered descend  
Close on us both, to weigh down each to  
each,  
And smother up all life except our life.  
So lay we till the storm came.

*Sebald.* How it came!

*Ottima.* Buried in woods we lay, you  
recollect;  
Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;  
And ever and anon some bright white shaft  
Burned thro' the pine-tree roof — here  
burned and there,  
As if God's messenger thro' the close wood  
screen

Plunged and replunged his weapon at a  
venture,

Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke  
The thunder like a whole sea overhead —

*Sebald.* Slower, Ottima —

*Ottima.* Sebald, as we lay,  
Who said, 'Let death come now! 't is right  
to die!

Right to be punished! nought completes  
such bliss

But woe! Who said that?

*Sebald.* How did we ever rise?  
Was 't that we slept? Why did it end?

*Ottima.* I felt you,  
Fresh tapering to a point the ruffled ends  
Of my loose locks 'twixt both your humid  
lips —

My hair is fallen now: knot it again!

*Sebald.* I kiss you now, dear Ottima,  
now, and now!

This way? Will you forgive me — be once  
more

My great queen?

*Ottima.* Bind it thrice about my brow;  
Crown me your queen, your spirit's ar-  
bitress,  
Magnificent in sin. Say that!

*Sebald.*

I crown you  
My great white queen, my spirit's arbitress,  
Magnificent —  
(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA  
singing)

The year 's at the spring,  
And day 's at the morn;  
Morning 's at seven;  
The hill-side 's dew-peared:  
The lark 's on the wing;  
The snail 's on the thorn;  
God 's in his heaven —  
All 's right with the world!

(PIPPA passes.)

*Sebald.* 'God 's in his heaven! Do you  
hear that? Who spoke?  
You, you spoke!

*Ottima.* Oh — that little ragged girl!  
She must have rested on the step: we give  
them  
But this one holiday the whole year round.  
Did you ever see our silk-mills — their  
inside?

There are ten silk-mills now belong to  
you.

She stoops to pick my double heart's-ease—  
Sh!

She does not hear: call you out louder!

*Sebald.* Leave me!  
Go, get your clothes on — dress those  
shoulders!

*Ottima.* Sebald!

*Sebald.* Wipe off that paint! I hate you!

*Ottima.* Miserable!

*Sebald.* My God! and she is emptied of  
it now!

Outright now! — how miraculously gone  
All of the grace — had she not strange  
grace once?

Why, the blank cheek hangs listless as it  
likes,

No purpose holds the features up together,  
Only the cloven brow and puckered chin  
Stay in their places; and the very hair,  
That seemed to have a sort of life in it,  
Drops, a dead web! —

*Ottima.* Speak to me — not of me!

*Sebald.* That round great full-orbed  
face, where not an angle

Broke the delicious indolence — all broken!

*Ottima.* To me — not of me! Ungrate-  
ful, perjured cheat!

A coward, too — but ingrate 's worse than  
all!

Beggar — my slave — a fawning, cringing  
lie!

Leave me! betray me! I can see your drift!  
A lie that walks and eats and drinks!

*Sebald.* My God!  
Those morbid, olive, faultless shoulder-  
blades —

I should have known there was no blood  
beneath!

Ottima. You hate me, then? You hate me, then?

Sebald.

To think

She would succeed in her absurd attempt,  
And fascinate by sinning, show herself  
Superior — guilt from its excess superior  
To innocence. That little peasant's voice  
Has righted all again. Though I be lost,  
I know which is the better, never fear,  
Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,  
Nature or trick! I see what I have done,  
Entirely now! Oh, I am proud to feel  
Such torments — let the world take credit  
thence —

I, having done my deed, pay too its price!  
I hate, hate — curse you! God's in his  
heaven!

Ottima.

Me!

Me! no, no, Sebald, not yourself — kill me!  
Mine is the whole crime. Do but kill  
me — then

Yourself — then — presently — first hear me  
speak!

I always meant to kill myself — wait, you!  
Lean on my breast — not as a breast;  
do n't love me

The more because you lean on me, my  
own

Heart's Sebald! There, there, both deaths  
presently!

Sebald. My brain is drowned now —  
quite drowned: all I feel  
Is — is, at swift-recurring intervals,  
A hurry-down within me, as of waters  
Loosened to smother up some ghastly pit:  
There they go — whirls from a black, fiery  
sea!

Ottima. Not me — to him, O God, be  
merciful!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing  
from the Hill-side to Orcana. Foreign  
Students of Painting and Sculpture, from  
Venice, assembled opposite the House of  
JULES, a young French Statuary, at  
Possagno.*

1st Student. Attention! my own post is  
beneath this window, but the pomegranate  
clump yonder will hide three or four of  
you with a little squeezing, and Schramm  
and his pipe must lie flat in the balcony.  
Four, five — who's a defaulter? We want  
everybody, for Jules must not be suffered  
to hurt his bride when the jest's found  
out.

2d Student. All here! Only our poet's  
away — never having much meant to be  
present, moonstrike him! The airs of that  
fellow, that Giovacchino! He was in violent  
love with himself, and had a fair prospect  
of thriving in his suit, so unmolested  
was it, — when suddenly a woman falls in  
love with him, too; and out of pure jealousy  
he takes himself off to Trieste, im-

mortal poem and all — whereto is this  
prophetic epitaph appended already, as  
Bluphocks assures me — *"Here a mammoth-poem lies, Fouled to death by butterflies."*  
His own fault, the simpleton! Instead of  
cramp couplets, each like a knife in your  
entrails, he should write, says Bluphocks,  
both classically and intelligibly. — *Æsculapius, an Epic. Catalogue of the drugs:*  
*Hebe's plaster — One strip Cools your lip.*  
*Phœbus' emulsion — One bottle Clears your*  
*throat.* *Mercury's bolus — One box Cures —*

3d Student. Subside, my fine fellow!  
If the marriage was over by ten o'clock,  
Jules will certainly be here in a minute  
with his bride.

2d Student. Good! — Only, so should  
the poet's muse have been universally acceptable,  
says Bluphocks, *et canibus nostris* —  
and Delia not better known to our literary  
dogs than the boy Giovacchino!

1st Student. To the point, now. Where's Gottlieb,  
the new-comer? Oh, — listen, Gottlieb,  
to what has called down this piece of friendly vengeance on Jules, of which  
we now assemble to witness the winding-up.  
We are all agreed, all in a tale, observe,  
when Jules shall burst out on us in a fury by and by; I am spokesman — the  
verses that are to undeceive Jules bear  
my name of Lutwyche — but each professes  
himself alike insulted by this strutting  
stone-squarer, who came alone from Paris  
to Munich, and thence with a crowd of us  
to Venice and Possagno here, but proceeds  
in a day or two alone again — oh, alone  
indubitably! — to Rome and Florence. He,  
forsooth, take up his portion with these  
dissolute, brutalized, heartless bunglers! —  
so he was heard to call us all: now, is Schramm  
brutalized, I should like to know?  
Am I heartless?

Gottlieb. Why, somewhat heartless; for,  
suppose Jules a coxcomb as much as you  
choose, still, for this mere coxcombr, you  
will have brushed off — what do folks style  
it? — the bloom of his life. Is it too late  
to alter? These love-letters, now, you call  
his — I can't laugh at them.

4th Student. Because you never read the  
sham letters of our inditing which drew  
forth these.

Gottlieb. His discovery of the truth will  
be frightful.

4th Student. That's the joke. But you  
should have joined us at the beginning:  
there's no doubt he loves the girl — loves  
a model he might hire by the hour!

Gottlieb. See here! 'He has been accus-  
tomed,' he writes, 'to have Canova's women  
about him in stone, and the world's women  
beside him in flesh; these being as much  
below, as those above, his soul's aspiration;

but now he is to have the reality.'—There you laugh again! I say, you wipe off the very dew of his youth.

*1st Student.* Schramm! (Take the pipe out of his mouth, somebody)—will Jules lose the bloom of his youth?

*Schramm.* Nothing worth keeping is ever lost in this world: look at a blossom—it drops presently, having done its service and lasted its time; but fruits succeed, and where would be the blossom's place could it continue? As well affirm that your eye is no longer in your body, because its earliest favourite, whatever it may have first loved to look on, is dead and done with—as that any affection is lost to the soul when its first object, whatever happened first to satisfy it, is superseded in due course. Keep but ever looking, whether with the body's eye or the mind's, and you will soon find something to look on! Has a man done wondering at women?—there follow men, dead and alive, to wonder at. Has he done wondering at men?—there's God to wonder at: and the faculty of wonder may be, at the same time, old and tired enough with respect to its first object, and yet young and fresh sufficiently, so far as concerns its novel one. Thus—

*1st Student.* Put Schramm's pipe into his mouth again! There, you see! Well, this Jules—a wretched fribble—oh, I watched his disportings at Possagno, the other day! Canova's gallery—you know: there he marches first resolutely past great works by the dozen without vouchsafing an eye; all at once he stops full at the *Psicche-fanciulla*—cannot pass that old acquaintance without a nod of encouragement—'In your new place, beauty?' Then behave yourself as well here as at Munich—I see you! Next he posts himself deliberately before the unfinished *Pietà* for half an hour without moving, till up he starts of a sudden, and thrusts his very nose into—I say, into—the group; by which gesture you are informed that precisely the sole point he had not fully mastered in Canova's practice was a certain method of using the drill in the articulation of the knee-joint—and that, likewise, has he mastered at length! Good-bye, therefore, to poor Canova—whose gallery no longer need detain his successor Jules, the predestinated novel thinker in marble!

*5th Student.* Tell him about the women: go on to the women!

*1st Student.* Why, on that matter he could never be supercilious enough. How should we be other (he said) than the poor devils you see, with those debasing habits we cherish? He was not to wallow in that mire, at least; he would wait, and love only

at the proper time, and meanwhile put up with the *Psicche-fanciulla*. Now I happened to hear of a young Greek—real Greek girl at Malamocco; a true Islander, do you see, with Alciphron's 'hair like sea-moss'—Schramm knows!—white and quiet as an apparition, and fourteen years old at farthest,—a daughter of Natalia, so she swears—that hag Natalia, who helps us to models at three *lire* an hour. We selected this girl for the heroine of our jest. So, first, Jules received a scented letter—somebody had seen his Tydeus at the Academy, and my picture was nothing to it: a profound admirer bade him persevere—would make herself known to him ere long. (Paolina, my little friend of the *Fenice*, transcribes divinely.) And in due time, the mysterious correspondent gave certain hints of her peculiar charms—the pale cheeks, the black hair—whatever, in short, had struck us in our Malamocco model: we retained her name, too—Phene, which is by interpretation sea-eagle. Now, think of Jules finding himself distinguished from the herd of us by such a creature! In his very first answer he proposed marrying his mistress: and fancy us over these letters, two, three times a day, to receive and dispatch! I concocted the main of it: relations were in the way—secrecy must be observed—in fine, would he wed her on trust, and only speak to her when they were indissolubly united? St—st—Here they come!

*6th Student.* Both of them! Heaven's love, speak softly, speak within yourselves!

*5th Student.* Look at the bridegroom! Half his hair in storm, and half in calm,—patted down over the left temple,—like a frothy cup one blows on to cool it! and the same old blouse that he murders the marble in!

*2d Student.* Not a rich vest like yours, Hannibal Scratchy!—rich, that your face may the better set it off!

*6th Student.* And the bride! Yes, sure enough, our Phene! Should you have known her in her clothes? How magnificently pale!

*Göttlieb.* She does not also take it for earnest, I hope?

*1st Student.* Oh, Natalia's concern, that is! We settle with Natalia.

*6th Student.* She does not speak—has evidently let out no word. The only thing is, will she equally remember the rest of her lesson, and repeat correctly all those verses which are to break the secret to Jules?

*Göttlieb.* How he gazes on her! Pity—pity!

*1st Student.* They go in: now, silence! You three,—not nearer the window, mind,

that that correspondence — the whole life  
of that girl was a few months ago present  
in keeping in mind.

III — *Flora*

Dear Friends. The Flora of Fortune now  
comes in with a new Poem, no a  
shorter or longer than before.

Dear old Poet, I am sorry now, now  
you come now to Poet you'll be now the  
same.

If you'll let me remember all. So many  
things — a simple case, I never had.  
The shape of her and dresses, etc.,  
etc.

Like an antique flower appears after long  
absence.

Over this — in the poor flower water  
in their room.

Pooh about my own eyes now. She's gone  
now.

This she was all I thought, good too — I  
thought.

Thoughts and such thoughts. Then by the  
time I say now, had a very bad cold, then  
had got to bed, we all a time. Then

I have spoken much now.

Oh, my love to you,  
My Fortune must be carried now to where  
I am.

Her love be carried with you, never the  
same.

Where must I take you? When I think  
her gone.

The memory of young faces were seemed  
by her.

Wishful love. Such I never worth again.  
Let others see me no more again.

Her dear countenance could make her of  
me.

Her dear countenance so luminous to every  
one, my heart melted like wax when

she was —

The love itself, passing and repassing over  
dying leaves like

*New Poem*

Now then, now then,  
See all your letters. You're not well  
remembered.

Your beauty-shape is Fortune's like the  
sun.

Your letters were her sun, which creeps  
on continually!

— the tree whose flowers like a fire  
burn the world.

Again these two poems.  
These ridiculous letters now and then  
of all our loves, now & then, and then  
as we were poor we were wretched too.

As I told you some other day, a month  
ago the world has been thrown off balance  
and seems under the hand of Providence.

But now the world goes good and well

What you are as Fortune's flower, I  
will now tell you in the words then  
are.

This morning a Colossal went to see  
Death and where he Burden's a soldier —  
Death the man — as Fortune — Death's a  
man.

Fate remained the flower the age of the  
poor girl.

As Fortune is death, Death comes from  
the hand Fortune's flower, "Your days  
and years."

It takes your days well for presents  
of love, but — nothing good  
a long time — a flower here for the  
days.

Years were your flower. As Fortune  
—

As it is said that — better the old one  
When old is known — as Fortune's flower  
the old.

Young girls and girls, with flowers  
Leave us too.

Then takes care of. When, notwithstanding  
I thought you would have seen the last  
you as

As I imagined you — Fortune.  
And when her wings — another flower  
Faded was the flower "Leave to old value"  
— the old commanding — flower against I  
came.

A Flower is Fortune as her flower was  
Burden her flower and burden too.  
With these words the old commanding  
Flower when was new Fortune's by  
the girls.

"Well for my head the singer's always  
to the above our champion stand in  
old."

See, I have attempted to connect your  
poems, a cluster of these hands, and  
such.

There is all manner of work, even of  
the commanding in the Burden and  
the flower of Burden between the flower to  
a such time.

The Fortune's in the center with even even  
position to those two hands of light and dark  
the green where Burden's flower stands  
in.

As commanding as the Burdening and  
the flower and arms and the green and a  
work.

From the drenched leaves o'erhead, nor  
crown cast off,  
Violet and parsley crowns to trample on—  
Sings, pausing as the patron-ghosts approve,  
Devoutly their unconquerable hymn!  
But you must say a 'well' to that—say,  
'well!'  
Because you gaze—am I fantastic, sweet?  
Gaze like my very life's-stuff, marble—  
marbley  
Even to the silence! why, before I found  
The real flesh Phene, I inured myself  
To see, throughout all nature, varied stuff  
For better nature's birth by means of art:  
With me, each substance tended to one  
form  
Of beauty—to the human archetype.  
On every side occurred suggestive germs  
Of that—the tree, the flower—or take the  
fruit,—  
Some rosy shape, continuing the peach,  
Curved bee-wise o'er its bough; as rosy  
limbs,  
Depending, nestled in the leaves; and just  
From a cleft rose-peach the whole Dryad  
sprang!  
But of the stuffs one can be master of,  
How I divined their capabilities!  
From the soft-rinded smoothening facile  
chalk  
That yields your outline to the air's em-  
brace,  
Half-softened by a halo's pearly gloom,  
Down to the crisp imperious steel, so sure  
To cut its one confided thought clean out  
Of all the world. But marble!—'neath  
my tools  
More pliable than jelly—as it were  
Some clear primordial creature dug from  
depths  
In the earth's heart, where itself breeds  
itself,  
And whence all baser substance may be  
worked—  
Refine it off to air you may, condense it  
Down to the diamond;—is not metal there,  
When o'er the sudden specks my chisel  
trips?  
— Not flesh, as flake off flake I scale, ap-  
proach,  
Lay bare those bluish veins of blood  
asleep?  
Lurks flame in no strange windings where,  
surprised  
By the swift implement sent home at once,  
Flushes and glowings radiate and hover  
About its track?—

Phene! what—why is this?  
That whitening cheek, those still-dilating  
eyes!  
Ah, you will die—I knew that you would  
die!

*Phene begins, on his having long  
remained silent.*

Now the end's coming; to be sure, it must  
Have ended sometime! Tush, why need  
I speak  
Their foolish speech? I cannot bring to  
mind  
One half of it, beside, and do not care  
For old Natalia now, nor any of them.  
Oh, you—what are you?—if I do not try  
To say the words Natalia made me learn,  
To please your friends,—it is to keep  
myself  
Where your voice lifted me, by letting that  
Proceed; but can it? Even you, perhaps,  
Cannot take up, now you have once let fall,  
The music's life, and me along with that—  
No, or you would! We'll stay, then, as we  
are—  
Above the world.  
    *You creature with the eyes!*  
If I could look forever up to them,  
As now you let me, I believe, all sin,  
All memory of wrong done, suffering borne,  
Would drop down, low and lower, to the  
earth  
Whence all that's low comes, and there  
touch and stay—  
Never to overtake the rest of me,  
All that, unspotted, reaches up to you,  
Drawn by those eyes! What rises is my-  
self,  
Not me the shame and suffering; but they  
sink,  
Are left, I rise above them. Keep me so  
Above the world!  
    *But you sink, for your eyes*  
Are altering—altered! Stay—I love you,  
love—  
I could prevent it if I understood  
More of your words to me—was 't in the  
tone  
Or the words, your power?  
    *Or stay—I will repeat*  
Their speech, if that contents you! Only,  
change  
No more, and I shall find it presently  
Far back here, in the brain yourself filled  
up.  
Natalia threatened me that harm would  
follow  
Unless I spoke their lesson to the end,  
But harm to me, I thought she meant,  
not you.  
Your friends—Natalia said they were  
your friends  
And meant you well—because, I doubted  
it,  
Observing (what was very strange to see)  
On every face, so different in all else,  
The same smile girls like me are used to  
bear,  
But never men, men cannot stoop so low:

Yet your friends, speaking of you, used  
that smile,  
That hateful smirk of boundless self-con-  
ceit  
Which seems to take possession of the  
world  
And make of God their tame confederate,  
Purveyor to their appetites — you know!  
But still Natalia said they were your  
friends,  
And they assented though they smiled the  
more,  
And all came round me — that thin Eng-  
lishman  
With light, lank hair seemed leader of the  
rest;  
He held a paper — 'What we want,' said  
he,  
Ending some explanation to his friends,  
'Is something slow, involved, and mystical,  
To hold Jules long in doubt, yet take his  
taste  
And lure him on until at innermost  
Where he seeks sweetness' soul, he may  
find — this!  
As in the apple's core the noisome fly;  
For insects on the rind are seen at once,  
And brushed aside as soon, but this is  
found  
Only when on the lips or loathing tongue.  
And so he read what I have got by heart:  
I 'll speak it, — 'Do not die, love! I am  
yours' —  
No — is not that, or like that, part of  
words  
Yourself began by speaking? Strange to  
lose  
What cost much pains to learn! Is this  
more right?  
  
*I am a painter who cannot paint;*  
*In my life, a devil rather than saint,*  
*In my brain, as poor a creature too —*  
*No end to all I cannot do!*  
*Yet do one thing at least I can —*  
*Love a man, or hate a man*  
*Supremely: thus my love began.*  
*Through the Valley of Love I went,*  
*In its lozengest spot to abide,*  
*And just on the verge where I pitched my*  
*tent,*  
*I found Hate dwelling beside.*  
(Let the Bridegroom ask what the painter  
meant  
Of his Bride, of the peerless Bride!)  
And further, I traversed Hate's Grove,  
In its hatefulest nook to dwell;  
But lo, where I flung myself prone, couched  
Love  
Where the shadow threefold fell!  
(The meaning — those black bride's-eyes  
above,  
Not the painter's lip should tell!)

'And here,' said he, 'Jules probably will ask,  
You have black eyes, love — you are, sure  
enough,  
My peerless bride, — then do you tell, in-  
deed,  
What needs some explanation — what  
means this?' —  
And I am to go on, without a word —  
  
*So I grew wise in Love and Hate,*  
*From simple that I was of late.*  
*Once, when I loved, I would enlace*  
*Breast, eyelids, hands, feet, form, and face*  
*Of her I loved, in one embrace —*  
*As if by mere love I could love immensely!*  
*And when I hated, I would plunge*  
*My sword, and wipe with the first lunge*  
*My foe's whole life out like a sponge —*  
*As if by mere hate I could hate intensely!*  
But now I am wiser, know better the fash-  
ion  
*How passion seeks aid from its opposite*  
*passion;*  
*And if I see cause to love more, or hate*  
*more*  
*Than ever man loved, ever hated, before —*  
*And seek in the Valley of Love*  
*The nest, or the nook in Hate's Grove,*  
*Where my soul may surely reach*  
*The essence, nought less, of each,*  
*The Hate of all Hates, the Love*  
*Of all Loves, in the Valley or Grove —*  
I find them the very warders  
Each of the other's borders.  
When I love most, Love is disguised  
In Hate; and when Hate is surprised  
In Love, then I hate most: ask  
How Love smiles through Hate's iron  
casque,  
Hate grins through Love's rose-braided  
mask, —  
And how, having hated thee,  
I sought long and painfully  
To reach thy heart, nor prick  
The skin, but pierce to the quick —  
Ask this, my Jules, and be answered  
straight  
By thy bride — how the painter Lutwyche  
can hate!

## JULES interposes.

Lutwyche! who else? But all of them, no  
doubt,  
Hated me: they at Venice — presently  
Their turn, however! You I shall not  
meet:  
If I dreamed, saying this would wake me!  
Keep  
What 's here, the gold — we cannot meet  
again,  
Consider — and the money was but meant  
For two years' travel, which is over now,  
All chance or hope or care or need of it.

This—and what comes from selling these,  
my casts  
And books and medals, except—let them  
go  
Together, so the produce keeps you safe  
Out of Natalia's clutches!—If by chance  
(For all 's chance here) I should survive  
the gang  
At Venice, root out all fifteen of them,  
We might meet somewhere, since the world  
is wide.  
(From without is heard the voice of PIPPA  
singing)

*Give her but a least excuse to love me!*  
*When—where—*  
*How—can this arm establish her above me,*  
*If fortune fixed her as my lady there,*  
*There already, to eternally reprove me?*  
(*'Hist'* said Kate the Queen;  
But '*Oh!*' cried the maiden, binding her  
tresses,  
'T is only a page that carols unseen,  
Crumbling your hounds their messes!')

*Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her  
honour,*  
*My heart!*  
*Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a  
donor?*  
*Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part!*  
*But that fortune should have thrust all this  
upon her!*  
(*'Nay, list'* bade Kate the Queen;  
And still cried the maiden, binding her  
tresses,  
'T is only a page that carols unseen  
Fitting your hawks their jesses!')  
(*PIPPA passes*)

## JULES resumes.

What name was that the little girl sang  
forth?  
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced  
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here  
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,  
And peasants sing how once a certain  
page  
Pined for the grace of her so far above  
His power of doing good to 'Kate the  
Queen'—  
'She never could be wronged, be poor,' he  
sighed,  
'Need him to help her!'

Yes, a bitter thing  
To see our lady above all need of us;  
Yet so we look ere we will love; not I,  
But the world looks so. If whoever loves  
Must be, in some sort, god or worshipper,  
The blessing or the blest one, queen or  
page,  
Why should we always choose the page's  
part?

Here is a woman with utter need of me,—  
I find myself queen here, it seems!

How strange!

Look at the woman here with the new soul,  
Like my own Psyche,—fresh upon her  
lips

Alit the visionary butterfly,  
Waiting my word to enter and make  
bright,

Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.  
This body had no soul before, but slept  
Or stirred, was beauteous or ungainly, free  
From taint or foul with stain, as outward  
things

Fastened their image on its passiveness;  
Now, it will wake, feel, live—or die  
again!

Shall to produce form out of unshaped  
stuff

Be art—and, further, to evoke a soul  
From form be nothing? This new soul is  
mine!

Now, to kill Lutwyche, what would that  
do?—save

A wretched dauber, men will hoot to death  
Without me, from their laughter!—Oh,  
to hear

God's voice plain as I heard it first, before  
They broke in with their laughter! I  
heard them

Henceforth, not God!

To Ancona—Greece—some isle!  
I wanted silence only! there is clay  
Everywhere. One may do whate'er one  
likes

In art; the only thing is, to make sure  
That one does like it—which takes pains  
to know.

Scatter all this, my Phene—this mad  
dream!

Who, what is Lutwyche, what Natalia's  
friends,

What the whole world except our love—  
my own.

Own Phene? But I told you, did I not,  
Ere night we travel for your land—some  
isle

With the sea's silence on it? Stand aside—  
I do but break these paltry models up  
To begin art afresh. Meet Lutwyche, I—  
And save him from my statue meeting  
him?

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!  
Like a god going thro' his world there  
stands

One mountain for a moment in the dusk,  
Whole brotherhoods of cedars on its  
brow;

And you are ever by me while I gaze—  
Are in my arms as now—as now—as now!

Some unsuspected isle in the far seas!

Some unsuspected isle in far-off seas!

*Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing from Orcana to the Turret. Two or three of the Austrian Police loitering with BLUPHOCKS, an English vagabond, just in view of the Turret.*

*Bluphocks.\** So that is your Pippa, the little girl who passed us singing? Well, your Bishop's Intendant's money shall be honestly earned:—now, do n't make me that sour face because I bring the Bishop's name into the business: we know he can have nothing to do with such horrors; we know that he is a saint and all that a bishop should be, who is a great man besides. *Oh! were but every worm a maggot, Every fly a grig, Every bough a Christmas fagot, Every tune a jig!* In fact, I have abjured all religions; but the last I inclined to was the Armenian: for I have travelled, do you see, and at Koenigsberg, Prussia Improper (so styled because there's a sort of bleak hungry sun there), you might remark over a venerable house-porch a certain Chaldean inscription; and brief as it is, a mere glance at it used absolutely to change the mood of every bearded passenger. In they turned, one and all; the young and lightsome, with no irreverent pause, the aged and decrepit, with a sensible alacrity—'t was the Grand Rabbi's abode, in short. Struck with curiosity, I lost no time in learning Syriac (these are vowels, you dogs,—follow my stick's end in the mud—*Celarent, Darii, Ferio!*), and one morning presented myself spelling-book in hand, a, b, c—I picked it out letter by letter, and what was the purport of this miraculous posy? Some cherished legend of the past you'll say—'*How Moses hocus-pocussed Egypt's land with fly and locust*'—or, '*How to Jonah sounded harshish, Get thee up and go to Tarshish*'—or, '*How the angel meeting Balaam, Straight his ass returned a salaam*'. In no wise! '*Shackabracch—Boach—somebody or other—Isaach, Re-cei-ver, Pur-cha-ser, and Ex-chan-ger of—Stolen goods!*' So talk to me of the religion of a bishop! I have renounced all bishops save Bishop Beveridge—mean to live so—and die—*As some Greek dog-sage, dead and merry, Hellward bound in Charon's wherry—With food for both worlds, under and upper, Lupine-seed and Hecate's supper, and never, an obolus*—though, thanks to you, or this Intendant thro' you, or this Bishop thro' his Intendant, I possess a burning pocketful of *zwanzigers*—to pay the Stygian ferry!

\* "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

*1st Policeman.* There is the girl, then; go and deserve them the moment you have pointed out to us Signor Luigi and his mother. (*To the rest*) I have been noticing a house yonder this long while—not a shutter unclosed since morning!

*2nd Policeman.* Old Luca Gaddi's, that owns the silk-mills here: he dozes by the hour, wakes up, sighs deeply, says he should like to be Prince Metternich, and then dozes again, after having bidden young Sebald, the foreigner, set his wife to playing draughts. Never molest such a household, they mean well.

*Bluphocks.* Only, cannot you tell me something of this little Pippa I must have to do with? One could make something of that name. Pippa—that is short for Felippa—rhyming to—*Panurge consults Hertrippa—Believ'st thou, King Agrippa?* Something might be done with that name.

*2d Policeman.* Put into rhyme that your head and a ripe musk-melon would not be dear at half a *zwanziger!* Leave this fooling, and look out: the afternoon's over or nearly so.

*3d Policeman.* Where in this passport of Signor Luigi does our Principal instruct you to watch him so narrowly? There? what's there beside a simple signature? (That English fool's busy watching.)

*2d Policeman.* Flourish all round—'Put all possible obstacles in his way,' oblong dot at the end—'Detain him till further advices reach you,' scratch at bottom—'Send him back on pretence of some informality in the above,' ink-spirit on right-hand side (which is the case here)—'Arrest him at once.' Why and wherefore, I do n't concern myself, but my instructions amount to this: if Signor Luigi leaves home to-night for Vienna, well and good—the passport deposited with us for our *visa* is really for his own use, they have misinformed the Office, and he means well; but let him stay over to-night—there has been the pretence we suspect, the accounts of his corresponding and holding intelligence with the Carbonari are correct, we arrest him at once, to-morrow comes Venice, and presently Spielberg. Bluphocks makes the signal sure enough! That is he, entering the turret with his mother, no doubt.

### III.—EVENING

*Inside the Turret on the Hill above Asolo. LUIGI and his Mother entering.*

*Mother.* If there blew wind, you'd hear a long sigh, easing  
The utmost heaviness of music's heart.  
*Luigi.* Here in the archway?

*Mother.* Oh no, no—in farther,  
Where the echo is made, on the ridge.  
*Luigi.* Here surely, then.  
How plain the tap of my heel as I leaped  
up!  
Hark—'Lucius Junius!' The very ghost  
of a voice,  
Whose body is caught and kept by—what  
are those?  
Mere withered wallflowers, waving over-  
head?  
They seem an elvish group with thin  
bleached hair  
That lean out of their topmost fortress—  
look  
And listen, mountain men, to what we say,  
Hands under chin of each grave earthy  
face.  
Up and show faces all of you!—'All of  
you!'  
That 's the king's dwarf with the scarlet  
comb; old Franz,  
Come down and meet your fate! Hark—  
'Meet your fate!'  
*Mother.* Let him not meet it, my Luigi  
—do not  
Go to his city! Putting crime aside,  
Half of these ills of Italy are feigned;  
Your Pellicos and writers for effect  
Write for effect.  
*Luigi.* Hush! say A writes, and B.  
*Mother.* These A's and B's write for  
effect, I say.  
Then, evil is in its nature loud, while good  
Is silent; you hear each petty injury,  
None of his virtues; he is old beside,  
Quiet and kind, and densely stupid. Why  
Do A and B not kill him themselves?  
*Luigi.* They teach  
Others to kill him—me—and, if I fail,  
Others to succeed; now, if A tried and  
failed,  
I could not teach that: mine's the lesser  
task.  
Mother, they visit night by night—  
*Mother.* You, Luigi?  
Ah, will you let me tell you what you are?  
*Luigi.* Why not? Oh, the one thing you  
fear to hint,  
You may assure yourself I say and say  
Ever to myself. At times—nay, even as  
now  
We sit—I think my mind is touched, sus-  
pect  
All is not sound; but is not knowing that  
What constitutes one sane or otherwise?  
I know I am thus—so all is right again.  
I laugh at myself as through the town I  
walk,  
And see men merry as if no Italy  
Were suffering; then I ponder—I am rich,  
Young, healthy; why should this fact trou-  
ble me

More than it troubles these?" But it does  
trouble.  
No, trouble 's a bad word; for as I walk  
There 's springing and melody and giddi-  
ness,  
And old quaint turns and passages of my  
youth,  
Dreams long forgotten, little in themselves,  
Return to me—whatever may amuse me,  
And earth seems in a truce with me, and  
heaven  
Accords with me, all things suspend their  
strife,  
The very cicala laughs, 'There goes he, and  
there!  
Feast him, the time is short; he is on his  
way  
For the world's sake: feast him this once,  
our friend!'  
And in return for all this, I can trip  
Cheerfully up the scaffold-steps. I go  
This evening, mother!  
*Mother.* But mistrust yourself—  
Mistrust the judgment you pronounce on  
him!  
*Luigi.* Oh, there I feel—am sure that  
I am right!  
*Mother.* Mistrust your judgment, then,  
of the mere means  
To this wild enterprise: say you are right,  
How should one in your state e'er bring to  
pass  
What would require a cool head, a cold  
heart,  
And a calm hand? You never will escape.  
*Luigi.* Escape? To even wish that would  
spoil all.  
The dying is best part of it. Too much.  
Have I enjoyed these fifteen years of mine,  
To leave myself excuse for longer life:  
Was not life pressed down, running o'er  
with joy,  
That I might finish with it ere my fellows  
Who, sparerlier feasted, make a longer stay?  
I was put at the board-head, helped to all  
At first; I rise up happy and content.  
God must be glad one loves his world so  
much.  
I can give news of earth to all the dead  
Who ask me:—last year's sunsets, and  
great stars  
That had a right to come first and see ebb  
The crimson wave that drifts the sun  
away—  
Those crescent moons with notched and  
burning rims  
That strengthened into sharp fire, and there  
stood,  
Impatient of the azure—and that day  
In March, a double rainbow stopped the  
storm—  
May's warm, slow, yellow moonlit summer  
nights—  
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul!

*Mother.* (He will not go!) —

*Luigi.* You smile at me? 'T is true,—  
Voluptuousness, grotesqueness, ghastliness,  
Environ my devotedness as quaintly  
As round about some antique altar wreath  
The rose festoons, goats' horns, and oxen's  
skulls.

*Mother.* See now: you reach the city,  
you must cross  
His threshold — how?

*Luigi.* Oh, that 's if we conspired!  
Then would come pains in plenty, as you  
guess —

But guess not how the qualities most fit  
For such an office, qualities I have,  
Would little stead me otherwise employed,  
Yet prove of rarest merit only here.  
Every one knows for what his excellence  
Will serve, but no one ever will consider  
For what his worst defect might serve;  
and yet

Have you not seen me range our coppice  
yonder  
In search of a distorted ash? I find

The wry spoilt branch a natural perfect  
bow!

Fancy the thrice-sage, thrice-precautioned  
man

Arriving at the palace on my errand!  
No, no! I have a handsome dress packed  
up —

White satin here, to set off my black  
hair;

In I shall march — for you may watch  
your life out

Behind thick walls, make friends there to  
betray you;

More than one man spoils everything.  
March straight —

Only no clumsy knife to fumble for!  
Take the great gate, and walk (not saunter)

on  
Thro' guards and guards — I have re-  
hearsed it all

Inside the turret here a hundred times.  
Do n't ask the way of whom you meet,

observe,  
But where they cluster thickliest is the  
door

Of doors; they 'll let you pass — they 'll  
never blab

Each to the other, he knows not the favour-  
ite,

Whence he is bound and what 's his busi-  
ness now.

Walk in — straight up to him; you have no  
knife:

Be prompt, how should he scream? Then,  
out with you!

Italy, Italy, my Italy!  
You 're free, you 're free! Oh, mother,

I could dream  
They got about me — Andrea from his  
exile,

Pier from his dungeon, Gaultier from his  
grave!

*Mother.* Well, you shall go. Yet seems  
this patriotism

The easiest virtue for a selfish man  
To acquire. He loves himself — and next,  
the world —

If he must love beyond — but nought be-  
tween:

As a short-sighted man sees nought mid-  
way

His body and the sun above. But you  
Are my adored Luigi, ever obedient  
To my least wish, and running o'er with  
love;

I could not call you cruel or unkind.  
Once more, your ground for killing him! —  
then go!

*Luigi.* Now do you try me, or make  
sport of me?

How first the Austrians got these prov-  
inces —

If that is all, I 'll satisfy you soon —  
Never by conquest but by cunning, for  
That treaty 'whereby'

*Mother.* Well?

*Luigi.* (Sure he 's arrived,  
The tell-tale cuckoo — Spring 's his con-  
fidant,

And he lets out her April purposes!)  
Or — better go at once to modern time —  
He has — they have — in fact, I under-  
stand

But can't restate the matter; that 's my  
boast:

Others could reason it out to you, and  
prove

Things they have made me feel.

*Mother.* Why go to-night?  
Morn 's for adventure. Jupiter is now

A morning-star. I cannot hear you, Luigi!

*Luigi.* I am the bright and morning-  
star, saith God —

And, 'to such an one I give the morning-  
star!'

The gift of the morning-star! Have I  
God's gift

Of the morning-star?

*Mother.* Chiara will love to see  
That Jupiter an evening-star next June.

*Luigi.* True, mother. Well for those  
who live through June!

Great noontides, thunder-storms, all glaring  
pomps

Which triumph at the heels of June the  
God

Leading his revel thro' our leafy world.  
Yes, Chiara will be here —

*Mother.* In June: remember,  
Yourself appointed that month for her  
coming.

*Luigi.* Was that low noise the echo?

*Mother.*                   The night-wind.  
 She must be grown—with her blue eyes  
 upturned  
 As if life were one long and sweet sur-  
 prise:  
 In June she comes.

*Luigi.*                   We were to see together  
 The Titian at Treviso. There, again!  
 (From without is heard the voice of PIPPA  
 singing)

*A king lived long ago,*  
*In the morning of the world,*  
*When earth was nigher heaven than now;*  
*And the king's locks curled,*  
*Disparting o'er a forehead full*  
*As the milk-white space 'twixt horn and*  
*horn*  
*Of some sacrificial bull—*  
*Only calm as a babe new-born:*  
*For he was got to a sleepy mood,*  
*So safe from all decrepitude,*  
*Age with its bane, so sure gone by—*  
*The gods so loved him while he dreamed,*  
*That, having lived thus long, there seemed*  
*No need the king should ever die.*

*Luigi.* No need that sort of king should  
 ever die!

*Among the rocks his city was:*  
*Before his palace, in the sun,*  
*He sat to see his people pass,*  
*And judge them every one*  
*From its threshold of smooth stone.*  
*They haled him many a valley-thief*  
*Caught in the sheep-pens, robber-chief*  
*Swarthy and shameless, beggar-cheat,*  
*Spy-prowler, or rough pirate found*  
*On the sea-sand left aground;*  
*And sometimes clung about his feet,*  
*With bleeding lip and burning cheek,*  
*A woman, bitterest wrong to speak*  
*Of one with sullen thickset brows:*  
*And sometimes from the prison-house*  
*The angry priests a pale wretch brought,*  
*Who through some chink had pushed and*  
*pressed,*  
*On knees and elbows, belly and breast,*  
*Worm-like into the temple,—caught*  
*At last there by the very god,*  
*Who ever in the darkness strode*  
*Backward and forward, keeping watch*  
*O'er his brazen bowls, such rogues to catch!*  
*These, all and every one,*  
*The king judged, sitting in the sun.*

*Luigi.* That king should still judge sit-  
 ting in the sun!

*His councillors, on left and right,*  
*Looked anxious up,—but no surprise*  
*Disturbed the king's old smiling eyes,*  
*Where the very blue had turned to white.*

'T is said, a Python scared one day  
 The breathless city, till he came,  
 With forked tongue and eyes on flame,  
 Where the old king sat to judge alway;  
 But when he saw the sweepy hair,  
 Girt with a crown of berries rare  
 Which the god will hardly give to wear  
 To the maiden who singeth, dancing bare  
 In the altar-smoke by the pine-torch lights,  
 At his wondrous forest rites—  
 Seeing this, he did not dare  
 Approach that threshold in the sun,  
 Assault the old king smiling there.  
 Such grace had kings when the world  
 began!

(PIPPA passes.)

*Luigi.* And such grace have they, now  
 that the world ends!  
 The Python at the city, on the throne,  
 And brave men, God would crown for  
 slaying him,  
 Lurk in bye-corners lest they fall his prey.  
 Are crowns yet to be won, in this late  
 time,  
 Which weakness makes me hesitate to  
 reach?  
 'T is God's voice calls, how could I stay?  
 Farewell!

Talk by the way, while PIPPA is passing  
 from the Turret to the Bishop's brother's  
 House, close to the Duomo Santa Maria.  
 Poor Girls sitting on the steps.

*1st Girl.* There goes a swallow to  
 Venice—the stout sea-farer!  
 Seeing those birds fly, makes one wish  
 for wings.

Let us all wish; you, wish first!

*2d Girl.*                   ? This sunset  
 To finish.

*3d Girl.* That old—somebody I know,  
 Grayer and older than my grandfather,  
 To give me the same treat he gave last  
 week—

Feeding me on his knee with fig-peckers,  
 Lampreys, and red Breganze-wine, and  
 mumbling

The while some folly about how well I  
 fare,

Let sit and eat my supper quietly—  
 Since had he not himself been late this  
 morning,

Detained at—never mind where,—had he  
 not—

'Eh, baggage, had I not!—

*2d Girl.*                   How she can lie!

*1st Girl.*                   My turn.  
 Spring's come and summer's coming: I  
 would wear

A long loose gown—down to the feet  
 and hands,  
 With plaits here, close about the throat, all  
 day;

And all night lie, the cool long nights,  
in bed;  
And have new milk to drink, apples to eat,  
Deuzans and junetings, leather-coats — ah,  
I should say,

That is away in the fields — miles!

*3d Girl.* Say at once  
You'd be at home — she'd always be at  
home!

Now comes the story of the farm among  
The cherry orchards, and how April  
snowed

White blossoms on her as she ran. Why,  
fool,  
They've rubbed the chalk-mark out, how  
tall you were,  
Twisted your starling's neck, broken his  
cage,  
Made a dunghill of your garden!

*1st Girl.* They destroy  
My garden since I left them? well — per-  
haps!

I would have done so — so I hope they  
have!

A fig-tree curled out of our cottage wall;  
They called it mine, I have forgotten why,  
It must have been there long ere I was  
born:

*Cric — cric* — I think I hear the wasps  
o'erhead

Pricking the papers strung to flutter there  
And keep off birds in fruit-time — coarse  
long papers,  
And the wasps eat them, prick them through  
and through.

*3d Girl.* How her mouth twitches!  
Where was I? — before  
She broke in with her wishes and long  
gowns

And wasps — would I be such a fool? —  
Oh, here!

See how that beetle burnishes in the path!  
There sparkles he along the dust; and,  
there —

Your journey to that maize-tuft spoiled  
at least!

*1st Girl.* When I was young, they said  
if you killed one  
Of those sunshiny beetles, that his friend  
Up there would shine no more that day nor  
next.

*2d Girl.* When you were young? Nor  
are you young, that's true!  
How your plump arms, that were, have  
dropped away!

Why, I can span them! Cecco beats you  
still?

No matter, so you keep your curious hair.  
I wish they'd find a way to dye our hair  
Your colour — any lighter tint, indeed,  
Than black — the men say they are sick  
of black,  
Black eyes, black hair!

*4th Girl.* Sick of yours, like enough!  
Do you pretend you ever tasted lampreys  
And ortolans? Giovita, of the palace,  
Engaged (but there's no trusting him) to  
slice me

Polenta with a knife that had cut up  
An ortolan.

*2d Girl.* Why, there! is not that Pippa  
We are to talk to, under the window, —  
quick, —

Where the lights are?

*1st Girl.* That she? No, or  
she would sing.

For the Intendant said —

*3d Girl.* Oh, you sing first!  
Then, if she listens and comes close — I'll  
tell you,  
Sing that song the young English noble  
made,  
Who took you for the purest of the pure,  
And meant to leave the world for you —  
what fun!

*2d Girl.* [Sings]

*You'll love me yet!* — and I can tarry  
*Your love's protracted growing:*  
*June reared that bunch of flowers you*  
*carry*

*From seeds of April's sowing.*

*I plant a heartful now: some seed*  
*At least is sure to strike*  
*And yield — what you'll not pluck indeed,*  
*Not love, but, may be, like.*

*You'll look at least on love's remains,*  
*A grave's one violet:*  
*Your look? — that pays a thousand pains.*  
*What's death? — you'll love me yet!*

*3d Girl.* (To Pippa, who approaches)  
Oh, you may come closer — we shall not eat  
you! Why, you seem the very person that  
the great rich handsome Englishman has  
fallen so violently in love with! I'll tell  
you all about it.

#### IV.—NIGHT

*The Palace by the Duomo.* MONSIGNOR,  
dismissing his Attendants

*Monsignor.* Thanks, friends, many  
thanks. I chiefly desire life now, that I  
may recompense every one of you. Most  
I know something of already. What, a  
repast prepared? *Benedicto benedicatur* —  
ugh — ugh! Where was I? Oh, as you  
were remarking, Ugo, the weather is mild,  
very unlike winter-weather; but I am a  
Sicilian, you know, and shiver in your Julys  
here. To be sure, when 't was full sum-  
mer at Messina, as we priests used to cross  
in procession the great square on Assump-  
tion Day, you might see our thickest yellow  
tapers twist suddenly in two, each like a  
falling-star, or sink down on themselves

in a gore of wax. But go, my friends, but go! [To the Intendant] Not you, Ugo! [The others leave the apartment] I have long wanted to converse with you, Ugo!

*Intendant.* Uguccio—

*Monsignor.* — guccio Stefani, man! of Ascoli, Fermo, and Fossumbruno;—what I do need instructing about, are these accounts of your administration of my poor brother's affairs. Ugh! I shall never get through a third part of your accounts: take some of these dainties before we attempt it, however. Are you bashful to that degree? For me, a crust and water suffice.

*Intendant.* Do you choose this especial night to question me?

*Monsignor.* This night, Ugo. You have managed my late brother's affairs since the death of our elder brother—fourteen years and a month, all but three days. On the 3d of December, I find him—

*Intendant.* If you have so intimate an acquaintance with your brother's affairs, you will be tender of turning so far back: they will hardly bear looking into, so far back.

*Monsignor.* Ay, ay, ugh, ugh,—nothing but disappointments here below. I remark a considerable payment made to yourself on this 3d of December. Talk of disappointments! There was a young fellow here, Jules, a foreign sculptor I did my utmost to advance, that the Church might be a gainer by us both; he was going on hopefully enough, and of a sudden he notifies to me some marvellous change that has happened in his notions of art. Here's his letter: 'He never had a clearly conceived ideal within his brain till to-day. Yet since his hand could manage a chisel, he has practised expressing other men's ideals; and, in the very perfection he has attained to, he foresees an ultimate failure: his unconscious hand will pursue its prescribed course of old years, and will reproduce with a fatal expertness the ancient types, let the novel one appear never so palpably to his spirit. There is but one method of escape: confiding the virgin type to as chaste a hand, he will turn painter instead of sculptor, and paint, not carve, its characteristics,'—strike out, I dare say, a school like Correggio: how think you, Ugo?

*Intendant.* Is Correggio a painter?

*Monsignor.* Foolish Jules! and yet, after all, why foolish? He may—probably will, fail egregiously; but if there should arise a new painter, will it not be in some such way by a poet now, or a musician—spirits who have conceived and perfected an ideal through some other channel—transferring

it to this, and escaping our conventional roads by pure ignorance of them; eh, Ugo? If you have no appetite, talk at least, Ugo!

*Intendant.* Sir, I can submit no longer to this course of yours. First, you select the group of which I formed one,—next you thin it gradually,—always retaining me with your smile,—and so do you proceed till you have fairly got me alone with you between four stone walls. And now then? Let this farce, this chatter, end now—what is it you want with me?

*Monsignor.* Ugo!

*Intendant.* From the instant you arrived, I felt your smile on me as you questioned me about this and the other article in those papers—why your brother should have given me this villa, that *podere*,—and your nod at the end meant—what?

*Monsignor.* Possibly that I wished for no loud talk here. If once you set me coughing, Ugo!—

*Intendant.* I have your brother's hand and seal to all I possess: now ask me what for! what service I did him—ask me!

*Monsignor.* I would better not: I should rip up old disgraces, let out my poor brother's weaknesses. By the way, Maffeo of Forli—which, I forgot to observe, is your true name—was the interdict ever taken off you, for robbing that church at Cesena?

*Intendant.* No, nor needs be; for when I murdered your brother's friend, Pasquale, for him—

*Monsignor.* Ah, he employed you in that business, did he? Well, I must let you keep, as you say, this villa and that *podere*, for fear the world should find out my relations were of so indifferent a stamp! Maffeo, my family is the oldest in Messina, and century after century have my progenitors gone on polluting themselves with every wickedness under heaven: my own father—rest his soul!—I have, I know, a chapel to support that it may rest; my dear two dead brothers were—what you know tolerably well; I, the youngest, might have rivalled them in vice, if not in wealth, but from my boyhood I came out from among them, and so am not partaker of their plagues. My glory springs from another source; or if from this, by contrast only,—for I, the bishop, am the brother of your employers, Ugo. I hope to repair some of their wrong, however: so far as my brother's ill-gotten treasure reverts to me, I can stop the consequences of his crime; and not one *soldo* shall escape me. Maffeo, the sword we quiet men spurn away, you shrewd knaves pick up and commit murders with; what opportunities the virtuous forego, the villainous seize. Because, to

pleasure myself, apart from other considerations, my food would be millet-cake, my dress sackcloth, and my couch straw,—am I therefore to let you, the offscouring of the earth, seduce the poor and ignorant by appropriating a pomp these will be sure to think lessens the abominations so unaccountably and exclusively associated with it? Must I let villas and *poderi* go to you, a murderer and thief, that you may beget by means of them other murderers and thieves? No—if my cough would but allow me to speak!

*Intendant.* What am I to expect? You are going to punish me?

*Monsignor.* Must punish you, Maffeo. I cannot afford to cast away a chance. I have whole centuries of sin to redeem, and only a month or two of life to do it in. How should I dare to say—

*Intendant.* 'Forgive us our trespasses?'

*Monsignor.* My friend, it is because I avow myself a very worm, sinful beyond measure, that I reject a line of conduct you would applaud, perhaps. Shall I proceed, as it were, a-pardoning?—I, who have no symptom of reason to assume that aught less than my strenuous efforts will keep myself out of mortal sin, much less keep others out. No: I do trespass, but will not double that by allowing you to trespass.

*Intendant.* And suppose the villas are not your brother's to give, nor yours to take? Oh, you are hasty enough just now!

*Monsignor.* 1, 2—No. 3!—ay, can you read the substance of a letter, No. 3, I have received from Rome? It is precisely on the ground there mentioned, of the suspicion I have that a certain child of my late elder brother, who would have succeeded to his estates, was murdered in infancy by you, Maffeo, at the instigation of my late brother—that the Pontiff enjoins on me not merely the bringing that Maffeo to condign punishment, but the taking all pains, as guardian of the infant's heritage for the Church, to recover it parcel by parcel, howsoever, wheresoever, and wheresoever. While you are now gnawing those fingers, the police are engaged in sealing up your papers, Maffeo, and the mere raising my voice brings my people from the next room to dispose of yourself. But I want you to confess quietly, and save me raising my voice. Why, man, do I not know the old story? The heir between the succeeding heir, and this heir's ruffianly instrument, and their complot's effect, and the life of fear and bribes and ominous smiling silence? Did you throttle or stab my brother's infant? Come, now!

*Intendant.* So old a story, and tell it no better? When did such an instrument ever

produce such an effect? Either the child smiles in his face, or, most likely, he is not fool enough to put himself in the employer's power so thoroughly; the child is always ready to produce—as you say—howsoever, wheresoever, and whensover.

*Monsignor.* Liar!

*Intendant.* Strike me? Ah, so might a father chastise! I shall sleep soundly tonight at least, though the gallows await me to-morrow; for what a life did I lead! Carlo of Cesena reminds me of his connivance, every time I pay his annuity—which happens commonly thrice a year. If I remonstrate, he will confess all to the good bishop—you!

*Monsignor.* I see thro' the trick, caitiff! I would you spoke truth for once. All shall be sifted, however—seven times sifted.

*Intendant.* And how my absurd riches encumbered me! I dared not lay claim to above half my possessions. Let me but once unbosom myself, glorify heaven, and die!—Sir, you are no brutal, dastardly idiot like your brother I frightened to death: let us understand one another. Sir, I will make away with her for you—the girl—here close at hand; not the stupid obvious kind of killing; do not speak—know nothing of her or me! I see her every day—saw her this morning. Of course there is to be no killing; but at Rome the courtesans perish off every three years, and I can entice her thither—have, indeed, begun operations already. There's a certain lusty, blue-eyed, florid-complexioned English knave I and the police employ occasionally. You assent, I perceive—no, that's not it—assent I do not say—but you will let me convert my present havings and holdings into cash, and give me time to cross the Alps? 'T is but a little black-eyed, pretty singing Felippa, gay silk-winding girl. I have kept her out of harm's way up to this present; for I always intended to make your life a plague to you with her. 'T is as well settled once and forever. Some women I have procured will pass Bluphocks, my handsome scoundrel, off for somebody; and once Pippa entangled!—you conceive? Through her singing? Is it a bargain?

(*From without is heard the voice of PIPPA singing*)

*Overhead the tree-tops meet,  
Flowers and grass spring 'neath one's feet;  
There was nought above me, nought below,  
My childhood had not learned to know;  
For what are the voices of birds—  
Ay, and of beasts—but words, our words,*

*Only so much more sweet?  
The knowledge of that with my life begun.  
But I had so near made out the sun,  
And counted your stars, the seven and one,  
Like the fingers of my hand:  
Nay, I could all but understand  
Wherefore through heaven the white moon  
ranges;  
And just when out of her soft fifty changes  
No unfamiliar face might overlook me—  
Suddenly God took me!*

(PIPPA passes.)

*Monsignor.* [Springing up.] My people—one and all—all—within there! Gag this villain—tie him hand and foot! He dares—I know not half he dares—but remove him—quick! *Miserere mei, Domine!* quick, I say!

*Pippa's Chamber again. She enters it.*

The bee with his comb,  
The mouse at her dray,  
The grub in its tomb,  
Wile winter away;  
But the fire-fly and hedge-shrew and lob-worm, I pray,  
How fare they?  
Ha, ha, best thanks for your counsel, my Zanze!  
'Feast upon lampreys, quaff the Breganze'—  
The summer of life so easy to spend,  
And care for to-morrow so soon put away!  
But winter hastens at summer's end,  
And fire-fly, hedge-shrew, lob-worm, pray,  
How fare they?  
No bidding me then to — what did she say?  
'Pare your nails pearlwise, get your small feet shoes  
More like' — what said she? — 'and less like canoes!'  
How pert that girl was! — would I be those pert,  
Impudent, staring women? It had done me,  
However, surely no such mighty hurt  
To learn his name who passed that jest upon me:  
No foreigner, that I can recollect,  
Came, as she says, a month since, to inspect  
Our silk-mills — none with blue eyes and thick rings  
Of raw-silk-coloured hair, at all events.  
Well, if old Luca keep his good intents,  
We shall do better, see what next year brings!

I may buy shoes, my Zanze, not appear  
More destitute than you perhaps next year!  
Bluph — something! I had caught the uncouth name  
But for Monsignor's people's sudden clatter  
Above us — bound to spoil such idle chatter  
As ours; it were, indeed, a serious matter  
If silly talk like ours should put to shame  
The pious man, the man devoid of blame,  
The — ah, but — ah, but, all the same,

No mere mortal has a right  
To carry that exalted air;  
Best people are not angels quite:  
While — not the worst of people's doings  
scare  
The devil; so there 's that proud look to spare!

Which is mere counsel to myself, mind!

I have just been the holy Monsignor!  
And I was you too, Luigi's gentle mother,  
And you too, Luigi! — how that Luigi started

Out of the turret — doubtlessly departed  
On some good errand or another,  
For he passed just now in a traveller's trim,

And the sullen company that prowled  
About his path, I noticed, scowled  
As if they had lost a prey in him.  
And I was Jules the sculptor's bride,  
And I was Ottima beside,  
And now what am I? — tired of fooling.  
Day for folly, night for schooling!  
New-Year's day is over and spent,  
Ill or well, I must be content!

Even my lily's asleep, I vow;  
Wake up — here 's a friend I 've plucked you!

Call this flower a heart's-ease now!  
Something rare, let me instruct you,  
Is this, with petals triply swollen,  
Three times spotted, thrice the pollen,  
While the leaves and parts that witness  
The old proportions and their fitness  
Here remain unchanged, unmoved now —  
Call this pampered thing improved now!  
Suppose there 's a king of the flowers,  
And a girl-show held in his bowers —  
'Look ye, buds, this growth of ours,'  
Says he, 'Zanze from the Brenta,  
I have made her gorge pôlenta  
Till both cheeks are near as bouncing  
As her — name there 's no pronouncing!  
See this heightened colour too,  
For she swilled Breganze wine  
Till her nose turned deep carmine —  
'T was but white when wild she grew.  
And only by this Zanze's eyes  
Of which we could not change the size,  
The magnitude of all achieved  
Otherwise, may be perceived!'

Oh, what a drear, dark close to my poor day!  
How could that red sun drop in that black cloud?

Ah, Pippa, morning's rule is moved away,  
Dispensed with, never more to be allowed!  
Day's turn is over — now arrives the night's.  
O lark, be day's apostle  
To mavis, merle, and throstle,  
Bid them their betters jostle

From day and its delights!  
But at night, brother howlet, over the woods,  
Toll the world to thy chantry;  
Sing to the bats' sleek sisterhoods  
Full complines with gallantry:  
Then, owls and bats,  
Cowls and twats,  
Monks and nuns, in a cloister's moods,  
Adjourn to the oak-stump pantry!

[After she has begun to undress herself.]

Now, one thing I should like to really know:

How near I ever might approach all these I only fancied being, this long day—  
Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so

As to—in some way—move them—if you please,

Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
For instance, if I wind

Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind

[Sitting on the bedside.]

And broider Ottima's cloak's hem.

Ah, me and my important part with them,  
This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!

True in some sense or other, I suppose.

[As she lies down.]

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.

No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God—  
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
Are we; there is no last nor first.

[She sleeps.]

### IN A BALCONY

#### PERSONS

NORBERT

CONSTANCE

THE QUEEN

[1855.]

CONSTANCE and NORBERT

Nor. Now.

Con. Not now.

Nor. Give me them again, those hands—

Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!  
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through!

You cruellest, you dearest in the world,  
Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask—

How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?

There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.

Some time or other this was to be asked;  
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—  
Let me ask now, Love!

Con. Do, and ruin us.  
Nor. Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.

How I do love you! give my love its way!  
A man can have but one life and one death,  
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—

Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you mine,  
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,

Hold you and have you, and then die away  
If God please, with completion in my soul.

Con. I am not yours then? how content this man?

I am not his, who change into himself,  
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,

Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,

Give all that was of me away to him  
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,  
Takes part with him against the woman here,

Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw  
As caring that the world be cognisant  
How he loves her and how she worships him.

You have this woman, not as yet that world.  
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me  
By saying what I cease to care about,  
The courtly name and pride of circumstance—

The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with

Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more;

Just that the world may slip from under you—

Just that the world may cry 'So much for him—'

The man predestined to the heap of crowns:  
There goes his chance of winning one, at least!'

Nor. The world!

Con. You love it. Love me quite as well,

And see if I shall pray for this in vain!  
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks?

Nor. You pray for—what, in vain!

Con. Oh my heart's heart,  
How I do love you, Norbert!—that is right!

But listen, or I take my hands away.  
You say, 'let it be now'—you would go now

And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,

You love me—so you do, thank God!

*Nor.*

Thank God!

*Con.* Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,

And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,

Listening to me. You are the minister, The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.

To-night completes your wonderful year's-work

(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)

Made memorable by her life's success, The junction of two crowns, on her sole head,

Her house had only dreamed of anciently. That this mere dream is grown a stable truth,

To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?

Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?

You are the fate—your minute 's in the heaven.

Next comes the Queen's turn. 'Name your own reward!'

With leave to clench the Past, chain the To-come,

Put out an arm and touch and take the sun And fix it ever full-faced on your earth, Possess yourself supremely of her life,— You choose the single thing she will not grant;

Nay, very declaration of which choice Will turn the scale and neutralize your work.

At best she will forgive you, if she can. You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand?

*Nor.* Wait. First, do you retain your old belief

The Queen is generous,—nay, is just?

*Con.* There, there! So men make women love them, while they know

No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,

You that are just and generous beside, Make it your own case. For example now, I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—

Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—

The kiss, because you have a name at court. This hand and this, that you may shut in each

A jewel, if you please to pick up such. That's horrible? Apply it to the Queen— Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.

'I was a nameless man; you needed me: Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood

A certain pretty cousin at your side. Why did I make such common cause with you?

Access to her had not been easy else. You give my labours here abundant praise? 'Faith, labour, which she overlooked, grew play.

How shall your gratitude discharge itself? Give me her hand!

*Nor.* And still I urge the same. Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!*Con.* Yes, just. You love a rose; no harm in that:

But was it for the rose's sake or mine You put it in your bosom? mine, you said— Then, mine you still must say or else be false.

You told the Queen you served her for herself:

If so, to serve her was to serve yourself, She thinks, for all your unbelieving face! I know her. In the hall, six steps from us, One sees the twenty pictures; there 's a life

Better than life, and yet no life at all. Conceive her born in such a magic dome, Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,

Can recognize its given things and facts, The fight of giants or the feast of gods, Sages in senate, beauties at the bath, Chases and battles, the whole earth's display,

Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—

And who shall question that she knows them all,

In better semblance than the things outside?

Yet bring into the silent gallery Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,

Some lion, with the painted lion there— You think she'll understand composedly? — Say, 'that 's his fellow in the hunting-piece

Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times?'

Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth, Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,

Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal. The real exists for us outside, not her: How should it, with that life in these four walls,

That father and that mother, first to last No father and no mother—friends, a heap, Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time, And every one of them alike a lie!

Things painted by a Rubens out of nought Into what kindness, friendship, love should be;

All better, all more grandiose than life,  
Only no life; mere cloth and surface-paint,  
You feel, while you admire. How should  
she feel?

Yet now that she has stood thus fifty years  
The sole spectator in that gallery,  
You think to bring this warm real strug-  
gling love

In to her of a sudden, and suppose  
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's  
the truth—

She'll apprehend truth's value at a glance,  
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty?  
You only have to say 'so men are made,  
For this they act; the thing has many  
names,

But this the right one: and now, Queen,  
be just!

Your life slips back; you lose her at the  
word:

You do not even for amends gain me.  
He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Nor-  
bert,

Do you not understand?

*Nor.*                    The Queen's the Queen,  
I am myself — no picture, but alive  
In every nerve and every muscle, here  
At the palace-window o'er the people's  
street,  
As she in the gallery where the pictures  
glow:

The good of life is precious to us both.  
She cannot love; what do I want with rule?  
When first I saw your face a year ago  
I knew my life's good, my soul heard one  
voice —

'The woman yonder, there 's no use of life  
But just to obtain her! heap earth's woes  
in one

And bear them — make a pile of all earth's  
joys

And spurn them, as they help or help not  
this;

Only, obtain her! — How was it to be?  
I found you were the cousin of the Queen;  
I must then serve the Queen to get to you.  
No other way. Suppose there had been one,  
And I, by saying prayers to some white  
star

With promise of my body and my soul,  
Might gain you, — should I pray the star  
or no?

Instead, there was the Queen to serve!  
I served,

Helped, did what other servants failed to  
do.

Neither she sought nor I declared my  
end.

Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,  
I therefore name you as that recompense.  
She dreamed that such a thing could never  
be?

Let her wake now. She thinks there was  
more cause

In love of power, high fame, pure loyalty?  
Perhaps she fancies men wear out their  
lives

Chasing such shades. Then, I've a fancy  
too;

I worked because I want you with my  
soul:

I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now!  
*Con.* Had I not loved you from the very  
first,

Were I not yours, could we not steal out  
thus

So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,  
You might become impatient. What 's  
conceived

Of us without here, by the folks within?  
Where are you now? immersed in cares of  
state —

Where am I now? — intent on festal robes—  
We two, embracing under death's spread  
hand!

What was this thought for, what that  
scruple of yours

Which broke the council up? — to bring  
about

One minute's meeting in the corridor!  
And then the sudden sleights, strange  
secrecies,

Complots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,  
Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of  
a look,

'Does she know? does she not know? saved  
or lost?'

A year of this compression 's ecstasy  
All goes for nothing! you would give this  
up

For the old way, the open way, the world's,  
His way who beats, and his who sells  
his wife!

What tempts you? — their notorious happi-  
ness

Makes you ashamed of ours? The best  
you'll gain

Will be, the Queen grants all that you  
require,

Concedes the cousin, rids herself of you  
And me at once, and gives us ample leave  
To live like our five hundred happy friends.  
The world will show us with officious  
hand

Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,  
Where we so oft have stolen across its  
traps!

Get the world's warrant, ring the falcons'  
feet,

And make it duty to be bold and swift,  
Which long ago was nature. Have it so!  
We never hawked by rights till flung from  
fist?

Oh, the man's thought! — no woman's such  
a fool.

*Nor.* Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is more—  
 One made to love you, let the world take note!  
 Have I done worthy work? be love's the praise,  
 Though hampered by restrictions, barred against  
 By set forms, blinded by forced secrecies! Set free my love, and see what love can do  
 Shown in my life—what work will spring from that!  
 The world is used to have its business done On other grounds, find great effects produced  
 For power's sake, fame's sake, motives in men's mouth.  
 So, good; but let my low ground shame their high!  
 Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!  
 And love 's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!  
 I choose to wear you stamped all over me, Your name upon my forehead and my breast,  
 You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,  
 That men may see, all over, you in me— That pale loves may die out of their pretence  
 In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off.  
 Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long  
 Subdued in me, eating me through and through,  
 That now it 's all of me and must have way.  
 Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,  
 Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,  
 That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow, Trembling at last to its assured result—  
 Then think of this revulsion! I resume Life after death, (it is no less than life,  
 After such long unlovely labouring days) And liberate to beauty life's great need  
 Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,  
 Suprest itself erewhile. This eve 's the time—  
 This eve intense with yon first trembling star  
 We seem to pant and reach; scarce aught between  
 The earth that rises and the heaven that bends;  
 All nature self-abandoned, every tree Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts

And fixed so, every flower and every weed,  
 No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat; All under God, each measured by itself. These statues round us stand abrupt, distinct,  
 The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,  
 The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre, Nymph to her fawn, and Silence to her rose:  
 See God's approval on His universe! Let us do so—aspire to live as these In harmony with truth, ourselves being true!  
 Take the first way, and let the second come!  
 My first is to possess myself of you; The music sets the march-step—forward, then!  
 And there 's the Queen, I go to claim you of,  
 The world to witness, wonder and applaud.  
 Our flower of life breaks open. No delay!  
 Con. And so shall we be ruined, both of us.  
 Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone—  
 You do not know her, were not born to it,  
 To feel what she can see or cannot see. Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,  
 Generous as you are: for, in that thin frame Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with cares,  
 There lived a lavish soul until it starved, Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul—  
 Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin (The true man's-way) on justice and your rights,  
 Exactions and acquittance of the Past! Begin so—see what justice she will deal!  
 We women hate a debt as men a gift. Suppose her some poor keeper of a school Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months  
 And dole out children leave to go and play,  
 Herself superior to such lightness—she In the arm-chair's state and paedagogic pomp,  
 To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside—  
 We wonder such a face looks black on us?  
 I do not bid you wake her tenderness, (That were vain truly—none is left to wake)

But, let her think her justice is engaged  
To take the shape of tenderness, and  
mark

If she'll not coldly pay its warmest need!  
Does she love me, I ask you? not a whit:  
Yet, thinking that her justice was en-  
gaged

To help a kinswoman, she took me up—  
Did more on that bare ground than other  
loves

Would do on greater argument. For me,  
I have no equivalent of such cold kind  
To pay her with, but love alone to give  
If I give anything. I give her love:

I feel I ought to help her, and I will.  
So, for her sake, as yours, I tell you  
twice

That women hate a debt as men a gift.  
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—  
Could lay the whole I did to love's ac-  
count,

Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—  
Declaring my success was recompense;  
It would be so, in fact: what were it  
else?

And then, once loose her generosity,—  
Oh, how I see it! then, were I but you  
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,  
And make it offer what I really take,  
Accepting just, in the poor cousin's hand,  
Her value as the next thing to the  
Queen's—

Since none love Queens directly, none dare  
that,

And a thing's shadow or a name's mere  
echo

Suffices those who miss the name and  
thing!

You pick up just a ribbon she has worn,  
To keep in proof how near her breath  
you came.

Say, I'm so near I seem a piece of her—  
Ask for me that way—(oh, you under-  
stand)

You'd find the same gift yielded with a  
grace,

Which, if you make the least show to  
extort . . .

—You'll see! and when you have ruined  
both of us,

Dissertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

*Nor.* Then, if I turn it that way, you  
consent?

Tis not my way; I have more hope in  
truth:

Still, if you won't have truth—why, this  
indeed,

Were scarcely false, as I'd express the  
sense.

Will you remain here?

*Con.* O best heart of mine,  
How I have loved you! then, you take  
my way?

Are mine as you have been her minister,  
Work out my thought, give it effect for  
me,

Paint plain my poor conceit and make it  
serve?

I owe that withered woman everything—  
Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my  
part—

Help me to pay her! Stand upon your  
rights?

You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on  
you?

Your rights are mine—you have no rights  
but mine.

*Nor.* Remain here. How you know me!

*Con.* Ah, but still —

*Hé breaks from her: she remains.*

*Dance-music from within.*

#### Enter the QUEEN.

*Queen.* Constance!—She is here as he  
said. Speak! quick!

Is it so? is it true—or false? One word!

*Con.* True.

*Queen.* Mercifullest Mother,  
thanks to thee!

*Con.* Madam!

*Queen.* I love you, Constance,  
from my soul.

Now say once more, with any words you  
will,

'Tis true, all true, as true as that I speak.

*Con.* Why should you doubt it?

*Queen.* Ah,  
why doubt? why doubt?

Dear, make me see it! Do you see it so?  
None see themselves; another sees them  
best.

You say 'why doubt it?'—you see him  
and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace  
That if we had but faith—wherein we  
fail—

Whate'er we yearn for would be granted  
us;

Howbeit we let our whims prescribe de-  
spair,

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our  
will,

And so, accepting life, abjure ourselves.

Constance, I had abjured the hope of love  
And of being loved, as truly as yon palm  
The hope of seeing Egypt from that plot.

*Con.* Heaven!

*Queen.* But it was so, Constance,  
it was so!

Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—  
'Stop here, your life is set, you are grown  
old.'

Too late—no love for you, too late for  
love—

Leave love to girls. Be queen: let Con-  
stance love!

One takes the hint — half meets it like a child,  
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.  
'Oh, love, true, never think of love again!  
I am a queen: I rule, not love, indeed.'  
So it goes on; so a face grows like this,  
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,  
Till — nay, it does not end so, I thank God!

*Con.* I cannot understand —

*Queen.* The happier you!  
Constance, I know not how it is with men:  
For women, (I am a woman now like you)  
There is no good of life but love — but love!  
What else looks good, is some shade flung  
from love —

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned  
by me,  
Never you cheat yourself one instant! Love,  
Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest!

O Constance, how I love you!

*Con.* I love you.  
*Queen.* I do believe that all is come through you.

I took you to my heart to keep it warm  
When the last chance of love seemed dead in me;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not?

Not so! it is true and it shall be true!

*Con.* Tell it me: let me judge if true or false.

*Queen.* Ah, but I fear you! you will look at me  
And say 'she's old, she's grown unlovely quite  
Who ne'er was beauteous: men want beauty still.'

Well, so I feared — the curse! so I felt sure.

*Con.* Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say?

*Queen.* Constance, he came, — the coming was not strange —

Do not I stand and see men come and go?  
I turned a half-look from my pedestal  
Where I grow marble — 'one young man the more!'

He will love some one, — that is nought to me:

What would he with my marble stateliness?

Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;

The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,

And I still older, with less flesh to change —  
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.

It seemed still harder when he first began  
To labour at those state-affairs, absorbed  
The old way for the old end — interest.  
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts  
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,  
Professing they've no care but for your cause,

Thought but to help you, love but for your self,

And you the marble statue all the time  
They praise and point at as preferred to life,

Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,

First dancer's, gipsy's, or street baladine's!  
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,  
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,

Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,

Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,

While not a man of them broke rank and spoke,

Wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,  
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.

There have been moments, if the sentinel  
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,  
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,  
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

*Con.* Who could have comprehended?

*Queen.* Ay, who — who? Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.

Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps

It comes too late — would you but tell the truth.

*Con.* I wait to tell it.

*Queen.* Well, you see, he came,  
Outfaced the others, did a work this year  
Exceeds in value all was ever done,  
You know — it is not I who say it — all  
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)  
I grew aware not only of what he did,  
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work  
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake —

It must have finer aims to lure it on!  
I felt, I saw, he loved — loved somebody.  
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,

I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

*Con.* Me, madam?

*Queen.* It did seem to me, your face  
Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you

Was such a man to love? it seemed to me,

You saw he loved you, and approved the love,  
And so you both were in intelligence.  
You could not loiter in the garden, step  
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung  
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,  
So right, so beautiful, so like you both,  
That all this work should have been done by him  
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,  
But that at last — suppose, some night like this —  
Borne on to claim his due reward of me,  
He might say, 'Give her hand and pay me so.'  
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now!)  
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,  
— 'And he shall have it. I will make her blest,  
My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,  
My happiest woman's self that might have been!  
These two shall have their joy and leave me here.'  
Yes — yes —

*Con.*      Thanks!

*Queen.*      And the word was on my lips  
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear  
A mere calm statement of his just desire  
For payment of his labour. When — O Heaven,  
How can I tell you? cloud was on my eyes  
And thunder in my ears at that first word  
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all —  
He loved me — from the first step to the last,  
Loved me!

*Con.*      You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke  
Of love? what if you should mistake?

*Queen.*      No, no —  
No mistake! Ha, there shall be no mistake!  
He had not dared to hint the love he felt —  
You were my reflex — (how I understood!) He said you were the ribbon I had worn,  
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,  
And love, love was the end of every phrase.  
Love is begun — this much is come to pass,  
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours — I will learn, I will place my life on you, But teach me how to keep what I have won.  
Am I so old? this hair was early grey;

But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,  
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.  
I could sing once too; that was in my youth.  
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,  
Beautiful — for the last French painter did!  
I know they flatter somewhat; you are frank —  
I trust you. How I loved you from the first!  
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out  
And set her by their side to take the eye:  
I must have felt that good would come from you.  
I am not generous — like him — like you!  
But he is not your lover after all — It was not you he looked at. Saw you him?  
You have not been mistaking words or looks!  
He said you were the reflex of myself — And yet he is not such a paragon  
To you, to younger women who may choose  
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth!  
You know you never named his name to me —  
You know, I cannot give him up — ah God,  
Not up now, even to you!

*Con.*      Then calm yourself.  
*Queen.* See, I am old — look here, you happy girl,  
I will not play the fool, deceive myself; 'Tis all gone — put your cheek beside my cheek —  
Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!  
But then I set my life upon one chance. The last chance and the best — am I not left,  
My soul, myself? All women love great men  
If young or old — it is in all the tales — Young beauties love old poets who can love —  
Why should not he, the poems in my soul,  
The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,  
The constancy? I throw them at his feet.  
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape,  
And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's

That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?  
 You could not praise indeed the empty conch;  
 But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.  
 How I will love him! cannot men love love?  
 Who was a queen and loved a poet once Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!  
 Well, but men too; at least, they tell you so.  
 They love so many women in their youth, And even in age they all love whom they please;  
 And yet the best of them confide to friends That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—  
 They spend a day with such and tire the next;  
 They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,  
 Novelty even. Let us confess the truth, Horrible though it be—that prejudice, Prescription . . . curses! they will love a queen.  
 They will—they do. And will not, does not—he?  
*Con.* How can he? You are wedded —'tis a name  
 We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,  
 His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled  
 As you believe and I incline to think,  
 Aspire to be your favorite, shame and all?  
*Queen.* Hear her! there, there now— could she love like me?  
 What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace?  
 See all it does or could do! so, youth loves!  
 Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do  
 What I will—you, it was not born in! I Will drive these difficulties far and fast  
 As yonder mists curdling before the moon. I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve My youth from its enforced calamity,  
 Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,  
 His own in the eyes alike of God and man.  
*Con.* You will do—dare do . . . pause on what you say!  
*Queen.* Hear her! I thank you, Sweet, for that surprise.  
 You have the fair face: for the soul, see mine!  
 I have the strong soul: let me teach you, here.

I think I have borne enough and long enough,  
 And patiently enough, the world remarks,  
 To have my own way now, unblamed by all.  
 It does so happen (I rejoice for it) This most unhoped-for issue cuts the knot.  
 There's not a better way of settling claims  
 Than this; God sends the accident express:  
 And were it for my subjects' good, no more,  
 'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,  
 Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,  
 And bless God simply, or should almost fear  
 To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.  
 Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate!  
 How strong I am! could Norbert see me now!  
*Con.* Let me consider. It is all too strange.  
*Queen.* You, Constance, learn of me; do you, like me!  
 You are young, beautiful: my own, best girl,  
 You will have many lovers, and love one—  
 Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,  
 And taller than he is, for yourself are tall.  
 Love him, like me! give all away to him;  
 Think never of yourself; throw by your pride,  
 Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,  
 And love him simply for his very self.  
 Remember, I (and what am I to you?) Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,  
 Do all but just unlove him! He loves me.  
*Con.* He shall.  
*Queen.* You, step inside my inmost heart.  
 Give me your own heart: let us have one heart.  
 I'll come to you for counsel; 'this he says,  
 This he does; what should this amount to, pray?  
 Beseech you, change it into current coin.  
 Is that worth kisses? shall I please him there?  
 And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else?

Your love, according to your beauty's worth,  
 For you shall have some noble love, all gold:  
 Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.  
 — Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since,  
 I felt as I must die or be alone  
 Breathing my soul into an ear like yours: Now, I would face the world with my new life,  
 With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,  
 And then come back and tell you how it feels.  
 How soon a smile of God can change the world!  
 How we are made for happiness — how work  
 Grows play, adversity a winning fight! True, I have lost so many years. What then?  
 Many remain: God has been very good. You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams,  
 From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,  
 As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.  
 The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[She goes out, leaving CONSTANCE.  
*Dance-music from within.*

NORBERT Enters

Nor. Well! we have but one minute and one word.  
 Con. I am yours, Norbert!  
 Nor. Yes, mine.  
 Con. Not till now!

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

Nor. Constance!

Con. Your own! I know the thriftier way

Of giving — haply, 'tis the wiser way. Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,

With a new largess still at each despair) And force you keep in sight the deed, preserve

Exhaustless till the end my part and yours, My giving and your taking; both our joys

Dying together. Is it the wiser way? I choose the simpler; I give all at once. Know what you have to trust to, trade upon!

Use it, abuse it, — anything but think Hereafter, 'Had I known she loved me so, And what my means, I might have thriven with it.'

This is your means. I give you all myself.

Nor. I take you and thank God.

Con. Look on through years! We cannot kiss, a second day like this; Else were this earth, no earth.

Nor. With this day's heat We shall go on through years of cold.

Con. So, best! I try to see those years — I think I see. You walk quick and new warmth comes; you look back

And lay all to the first glow — not sit down For ever brooding on a day like this While seeing the embers whiten and love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect; and mine, Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

Nor. Just so. I take and know you all at once.

Your soul is disengaged so easily, Your face is there, I know you; give me time,

Let me be proud and think you shall know me.

My soul is slower: in a life I roll The minute out whereto you condense yours —

The whole slow<sup>w</sup>circle round you I must move,

To be just you. I look to a long life To decompose this minute, prove its worth. 'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one Shall show you, in the end, what fire was crammed

In that mere stone you struck: how could you know,

If it lay ever unproved in your sight, As now my heart lies? your own warmth would hide

Its coldness, were it cold.

Con. But how prove, how?

Nor. Prove in my life, you ask?

Con. Quick, Norbert — how?

Nor. That 's easy told. I count life just a stuff

To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.

Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.

As with the body — he who hurls a lance Or heaps up stone on stone, shows strength alike,

So I will seize and use all means to prove

And show this soul of mine you crown as yours,

And justify us both.

Con. Could you write books. Paint pictures! one sits down in poverty

And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

*Nor.* And loves one's painting and one's writing, then,  
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,

And we best as no other than we are.  
We live, and they experiment on life—  
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof  
To overlook the farther. Let us be  
The thing they look at! I might take your face

And write of it and paint it—to what end?

For whom? what pale dictatress in the air  
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form

With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life  
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,

Made for me, not for others in the world,  
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,

The cold calm power to see how fair you look.

I come to you—I leave you not, to write  
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there

Paint us.

*Con.* So, best!

*Nor.* I understand your soul.  
You live, and rightly sympathize with life,  
With action, power, success. This way is straight;

And days were short beside, to let me change

The craft my childhood learnt: my craft shall serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,  
Manure their barren lives, and force the fruit

First for themselves, and afterward for me

In the due tithe; the task of some one man,

By ways of work appointed by themselves.

I am not bid create—they see no star  
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—  
But bind in one and carry out their wills.  
So I began: to-night sees how I end.  
What if it see, too, my first outbreak here

Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,  
And instincts of the heart that teach the head?

What if the people have discerned at length

The dawn of the next nature, the new man

Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,  
And who, they trust, shall find them out  
new ways  
To heights as new which yet he only sees?

I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,  
This People—in our phrase, this mass of men—  
See how the mass lies passive to my hand

And how my hand is plastic, and you by  
To make the muscles iron! Oh, an end  
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first!

My will be on this People! then, the strain,

The grappling of the potter with his clay,  
The long uncertain struggle,—the success  
And consummation of the spirit-work,  
Some vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,

While rounded fair for lower men to see  
The Graces in a dance all recognize  
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart!

So triumph ever shall renew itself;  
Ever shall end in efforts higher yet,  
Ever begin . . .

*Con.* I ever helping?

*Nor.* Thus!  
[As he embraces her, the QUEEN enters.

*Con.* Hist, madam—so I have performed my part.

You see your gratitude's true decency,  
Norbert? a little slow in seeing it!  
Begin, to end the sooner. What's a kiss?

*Nor.* Constance!

*Con.* Why, must I teach it you again?

You want a witness to your dullness, sir?  
What was I saying these ten minutes long?  
Then I repeat—when some young hand-some man

Like you has acted out a part like yours,  
Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,  
So very far beyond him, as he says—  
So hopelessly in love, that but to speak  
Would prove him mad,—he thinks judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul  
Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant  
And very stalking-horse to cover him  
In following after what he dares not face—  
When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,

—May I not say so, madam?—tops his hope,  
And overpasses so his wildest dream,  
With glad consent of all, and most of her

The confidant who brought the same about  
—Why, in the moment when such joy  
explodes,  
I do hold that the merest gentleman  
Will not start rudely from the stalking-  
horse,  
Dismiss it with a 'There, enough of you!'  
Forget it, show his back unmannerly;  
But like a liberal heart will rather turn  
And say, 'A tingling time of hope was ours;  
Betwixt the fears and falterings, we two  
lived

A chanceful time in waiting for the prize:  
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill!  
And though I shall forget her in due time,  
Her use being answered now, as reason  
bids,

Nay as herself bids from her heart of  
hearts,

Still, she has rights, the first thanks go  
to her,

The first good praise goes to the pros-  
perous tool,

And the first—which is the last—reward-  
ing kiss.'

*Nor.* Constance? it is a dream—ah  
see, you smile!

*Con.* So, now his part being properly  
performed,

Madam, I turn to you and finish mine  
As duly; I do justice in my turn.  
Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and  
well;

He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I  
Who served to prove your soul accessible.  
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their  
place

When else they had wandered out into  
despair,

And kept love constant towards its nat-  
ural aim.

Enough, my part is played; you stoop  
half-way

And meet us royally and spare our fears:  
'Tis like yourself. He thanks you, so do I.  
Take him—with my full heart! my work  
is praised

By what comes of it. Be you happy, both!  
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—  
Do all for him, much more than a mere  
heart

Which though warm is not useful in its  
warmth

As the silk vesture of a queen! fold that  
Around him gently, tenderly. For him—  
For him,—he knows his own part.

*Nor.* Have you done?  
I take the jest at last. Should I speak now?  
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish  
child,

Or did you but accept it? Well—at least  
You lose by it.

*Con.* Nay, madam, 'tis your turn!  
Restrain him still from speech a little more,  
And make him happier and more confident!  
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet!  
Mark, Norbert! do not shrink now! Here  
I yield

My whole right in you to the Queen, ob-  
serve!

With her go put in practice the great  
schemes

You teem with, follow the career else  
closed—

Be all you cannot be except by her!  
Behold her!—Madam, say for pity's sake  
Anything—frankly say you love him!

Else

He'll not believe it: there's more earnest in  
His fear than you conceive: I know the  
man.

*Nor.* I know the woman somewhat, and  
confess

I thought she had jested better: she begins  
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait  
Your pleasure, madam: where is my re-  
ward?

*Queen.* Norbert, this wild girl (whom  
I recognize

Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,  
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,  
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold,  
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being  
strange)

— May still be right: I may do well to  
speak

And make authentic what appears a dream  
To even myself. For, what she says, is  
true—

Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now  
of love,

Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,  
But justified a warmth felt long before.  
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall  
say:

Strange! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis  
said.

Your courage helps mine: you did well  
to speak

To-night, the night that crowns your  
twelvemonths' toil—

But still I had not waited to discern  
Your heart so long, believe me. From the  
first

The source of so much zeal was almost  
plain,  
In absence even of your own words just  
now

Which opened out the truth. 'Tis very  
strange,

But takes a happy ending—in your love  
Which mine meets: be it so: as you choose  
me,

So I choose you.

*Nor.* And worthily you choose!  
I will not be unworthy your esteem,

No, madam. I do love you; I will meet  
Your nature, now I know it. This was  
well.

I see,—you dare and you are justified:  
But none had ventured such experiment,  
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,  
Less confident of finding such in me.  
I joy that thus you test me ere you grant  
The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best  
Of women to my arms: 'tis like yourself.  
So—back again into my part's set words—  
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,  
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,  
Create in me the love our Constance does.  
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—  
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent  
Invites a certain insect—that's myself—  
But the small eye-flower nearer to the  
ground.

I take this lady.

*Con.* Stay—not hers, the trap—  
Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst  
of all.

He is too cunning, madam! It was I,  
I, Norbert, who . . .

*Nor.* You, was it, Con-  
stance? Then,  
But for the grace of this divinest hour  
Which gives me you, I might not pardon  
here!

I am the Queen's: she only knows my  
brain—

She may experiment therefore on my heart  
And I instruct her too by the result.  
But, you, Sweet, you who know me, who  
so long

Have told my heart-beats over, held my  
life

In those white hands of yours,—it is not  
well!

*Con.* Tush! I have said it, did I not  
say it all?

The life, for her—the heart-beats, for  
her sake!

*Nor.* Enough! my cheek grows red, I  
think. Your test?

There's not the meanest woman in the  
world,

Not she I least could love in all the world,  
Whom, did she love me, did love prove  
itself,

I dared insult as you insult me now.  
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,  
'Take back the soul you offer—I keep  
mine'

But—'Take the soul still quivering on  
your hand,

The soul so offered, which I cannot use,  
And, please you, give it to some playful  
friend,

For—what's the trifle he requites me  
with?"

I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,

That two may mock her heart if it suc-  
cumb?

No! fearing God and standing 'neath His  
heaven,

I would not dare insult a woman so,  
Were she the meanest woman in the  
world,

And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

*Con.* Norbert!

*Nor.* I love once as I live

but once.

What case is this to think or talk about?  
I love you. Would it mend the case at all  
Should such a step as this kill love in me?  
Your part were done: account to God for  
it.

But mine—could murdered love get up  
again,

And kneel to whom you pleased to design-  
ate,

And make you mirth? It is too horrible.  
You did not know this, Constance? now  
you know

That body and soul have each one life,  
but one:

And here's my love, here, living, at your  
feet.

*Con.* See the Queen! Norbert—this  
one more last word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—  
thus

Loved me in earnest . . .

*Nor.* Ah, no jest holds here!  
Where is the laughter in which jests break  
up,

And what this horror that grows palpable?  
Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony?  
Have I done ill? Have I not spoken the  
truth?

How could I other? Was it not your test,  
To try me, and what my love for Constance  
meant?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,  
The first, that I should choose thus! so  
one takes

A beggar—asks him what would buy his  
child,

And then approves the expected laugh of  
scorn

Returned as something noble from the  
rags.

Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar! Ha,  
what's this?

You two glare each at each like panthers  
now.

Constance, the world fades; only you stand  
there!

You did not, in to-night's wild whirl of  
things,

Sell me—your soul of souls, for any  
price?

No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.  
Was it your love's mad trial to o'er-top

Mine by this vain self-sacrifice? well, still —  
 Though I should curse, I love you. I  
 am love

And cannot change: love's self is at your  
 feet. [The QUEEN goes out.

*Con.* Feel my heart; let it die against  
 your own!

*Nor.* Against my own! explain not; let  
 this be.

This is life's height.

*Con.* Yours! Yours! Yours!  
*Nor.* You and I —

Why care by what meanders we are here  
 In the centre of the labyrinth? men have  
 died

Trying to find this place, which we have  
 found.

*Con.* Found, found!

*Nor.* Sweet, never fear  
 what she can do!  
 We are past harm now.

*Con.* On the breast of God.  
 I thought of men — as if you were a man,  
 Tempting him with a crown!

*Nor.* This must end here —  
 It is too perfect!

*Con.* There's the music stopped.  
 What measured heavy tread? It is one  
 blaze

About me and within me.

*Nor.* Oh, some death  
 Will run its sudden finger round this  
 spark

And sever us from the rest —

*Con.* And so do well.  
 Now the doors open —

*Nor.* 'Tis the guard comes.

*Con.* Kiss!

# ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

[1806-1861]

## THE DESERTED GARDEN

[1838.]

I MIND me in the days departed,  
How often underneath the sun  
With childish bounds I used to run  
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;  
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,  
The greenest grasses Nature laid  
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,  
For no one entered there but I;  
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,  
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,  
And spread their boughs enough about  
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,  
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!  
I crept beneath the boughs, and found  
A circle smooth of mossy ground  
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,  
Bedropt with roses waxen-white  
Well satisfied with dew and light  
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,  
When all the garden flowers were trim,  
The grave old gardener prided him  
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,  
Here moving with a silken noise,  
Has blushed beside them at the voice  
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,  
She often may have plucked and twined,  
Half-smiling as it came to mind  
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,  
A child would watch her fair white rose,  
When buried lay her whiter brows,  
And silk was changed for shroud!

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns  
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)  
A child would bring it all its praise  
By creeping through the thorns!

To me upon my low moss seat,  
Though never a dream the roses sent  
Of science or love's compliment,  
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see  
The trace of human step departed:  
Because the garden was deserted,  
The blither place for me!

Friends, blame me not! a narrow ken  
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward;  
We draw the moral afterward,  
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide  
In silence at the rose-tree wall:  
A thrush made gladness musical  
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline  
To peck or pluck the blossoms white;  
How should I know but roses might  
Lead lives as glad as mine?

To make my hermit-home complete,  
I brought clear water from the spring  
Praised in its own low murmuring,  
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew  
(Without the melancholy tale)  
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"  
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook  
Such minstrel stories; till the breeze  
Made sounds poetic in the trees,  
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write  
I hear no more the wind athwart  
Those trees, nor feel that childish heart  
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,  
My footstep from the moss which drew  
Its fairy circle round: anew  
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse  
The madrigals which sweetest are;  
No more for me! myself afar  
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay  
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,  
I laughed unto myself and thought  
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear  
But that, whene'er was past away  
The childish time, some happier play  
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,  
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,  
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,  
Did I look up to pray!

The time is past; and now that grows,  
The cypress high among the trees,  
And I behold white sepulchres  
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,  
And I have learnt to lift my face,  
Reminded how earth's greenest place  
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,  
But more for Heavenly promise free,  
That I who was, would shrink to be  
That happy child again.

## CONSOLATION

[1838.]

ALL are not taken; there are left behind  
Living Belovèds, tender looks to bring  
And make the daylight still a happy thing.  
And tender voices, to make soft the wind:  
But if it were not so—if I could find  
No love in all the world for comforting,  
Nor any path but hollowly did ring  
Where 'dust to dust' the love from life  
disjoin'd;  
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving  
I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb  
Goes bleating up the moors in weary  
dearth)  
Crying, 'Where are ye, O my loved and  
loving?'—  
I know a voice would sound, 'Daughter, I  
AM.  
Can I suffice for Heaven and not for  
earth?'

## GRIEF

[1844.]

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;  
That only men incredulous of despair,  
Half-taught in anguish, through the mid-  
night air  
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access  
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness,  
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare  
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare  
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted  
man, express  
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to  
death—  
Most like a monumental statue set

In everlasting watch and moveless woe  
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.  
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not wet:  
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

[1844.]

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my  
brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads against  
their mothers,

And that cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the mea-  
dows,

The young birds are chirping in the nest.  
The young fawns are playing with the  
shadows,

The young flowers are blowing toward  
the west—

But the young, young children, O my  
brothers,

They are weeping bitterly!  
They are weeping in the playtime of the  
others,

In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the  
sorrow

Why their tears are falling so?  
The old man may weep for his to-morrow

Which is lost in Long Ago;  
The old tree is leafless in the forest,

The old year is ending in the frost,  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,

The old hope is hardest to be lost:  
But the young, young children, O my  
brothers,

Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their  
mothers,

In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken  
faces,

And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws and  
presses

Down the cheeks of infancy;  
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,  
Our young feet," they say, "are very  
weak;

Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the  
children,

For the outside earth is cold,  
And we young ones stand without, in our  
bewilderings,

And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen  
That we die before our time:  
Little Alice died last year, her grave is  
shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.  
We looked into the pit prepared to take  
her:  
Was no room for any work in the close  
clay!

From the sleep wherein she lieth none will  
wake her,

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and  
shower,

With your ear down, little Alice never  
cries;  
Could we see her face, be sure we should  
not know her,

For the smile has time for growing in  
her eyes:

And merry go her moments, lulled and  
stilled in

The shroud by the kirk-chime.  
It is good when it happens," say the chil-  
dren,

"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking  
Death in life, as best to have:  
They are binding up their hearts away from  
breaking,

With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and from  
the city,

Sing out, children, as the little thrushes  
do;

Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cow-  
slips pretty.

Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let  
them through!

But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the  
meadows

Like our weeds anear the mine?  
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-  
shadows,

From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,  
And we cannot run or leap;  
If we cared for any meadows, it were  
merely

To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,  
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids droop-  
ing

The reddest flower would look as pale  
as snow.

For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, under-  
ground;

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
In the factories, round and round.

"For all day the wheels are droning, turn-  
ing;

Their wind comes in our faces,  
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses  
burning,

And the walls turn in their places:  
Turns the sky in the high window, blank  
and reeling,

Turns the long light that drops adown  
the wall,  
Turn the black flies that crawl along the  
ceiling:

All are turning, all the day, and we with  
all.

And all day the iron wheels are droning,  
And sometimes we could pray,  
'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad  
moaning),

'Stop! be silent for to-day!'

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other  
breathing

For a moment, mouth to mouth!  
Let them touch each other's hands, in a  
fresh wreathing

Of their tender human youth!  
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or re-  
veals:

Let them prove their living souls against the  
notion

That they live in you, or under you, O  
wheels!

Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark;  
And the children's souls, which God is  
calling sunward,

Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my  
brothers,

To look up to Him and pray;  
So the blessed One who blesseth all the  
others,

Will bless them another day.  
They answer, "Who is God that He should  
hear us,

While the rushing of the iron wheels is  
stirred?

When we sob aloud, the human creatures  
near us

Pass by, hearing not, or answer not, a  
word,

And we hear not (for the wheels in their  
resounding)

Strangers speaking at the door:  
Is it likely God, with angels singing round  
Him,

Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we re-  
member,

And at midnight's hour of harm,

'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,

We say softly for a charm.

We know no other words except 'Our Father,'

And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,

God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,

And hold both within His right hand which is strong.

'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely

(For they call Him good and mild)

Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,

"Come and rest with me, my child."

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster,

"He is speechless as a stone:

And they tell us, of His image is the master Who commands us to work on.

Go to!" say the children, — "up in Heaven. Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.

Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:

We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."

Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,

O my brothers, what ye preach? For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,

And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!

They are weary ere they run; They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory

Which is brighter than the sun. They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;

They sink in man's despair, without its calm;

Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,

Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:

Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievably The harvest of its memories cannot reap, —

Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.

Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,

And their look is dread to see, For they mind you of their angels in high places,

With eyes turned on Deity.

"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,

Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart, —

Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,

And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,

And your purple shows your path! But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper

Than the strong man in his wrath."

### SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

[Privately printed 1847. — Published 1850.]

#### I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,

Who each one in a gracious hand appears To bear a gift for mortals, old or young: And, as I mused it in his antique tongue, I saw, in gradual vision through my tears, The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years, Those of my own life, who by turns had flung

A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,

So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;

And a voice said in mastery, while I strove, —

"Guess now who holds thee?" — "Death," I said. But, there, The silver answer rang, — "Not Death, but Love."

#### III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart! Unlike our uses and our destinies.

Our ministering two angels look surprise On one another, as they strike athwart Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art

A guest for queens to social pageantries, With gages from a hundred brighter eyes Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part

Of chief musician. What hast thou to do With looking from the lattice-lights at me, A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through

The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree? The chrism is on thine head, — on mine, the dew, — And Death must dig the level where these agree.

## IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,  
Most gracious singer of high poems! where  
The dancers will break footing, from the  
care

Of watching up, thy pregnant lips for more.  
And dost thou lift this house's latch too  
poor  
For hand of thine? and canst thou think  
and bear

To let thy music drop here unaware  
In folds of golden fulness at my door?  
Look up and see the casement broken in,  
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!  
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.  
Hush, call no echo up in further proof  
Of desolation! there's a voice within  
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . .  
alone, aloof.

## VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand  
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore  
Alone upon the threshold of my door  
Of individual life, I shall command  
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand  
Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
Without the sense of that which I forbore—  
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land  
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in  
mine

With pulses that beat double. What I do  
And what I dream include thee, as the wine  
Must taste of its own grapes. And when  
I sue

God for myself, He hears that name of  
thine,  
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

## VII

The face of all the world is changed, I  
think,

Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul  
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole  
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink  
Of obvious death, where I, who thought  
to sink,

Was caught up into love, and taught the  
whole

Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole  
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,  
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee  
anear.

The names of country, heaven, are changed  
away

For where thou art or shalt be, there or  
here;

And this . . . this lute and song . . .  
loved yesterday,

(The singing angels know) are only dear  
Because thy name moves right in what they  
say.

## VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal  
And princely giver, who hast brought the  
gold  
And purple of thine heart, unstained, un-  
told,  
And laid them on the outside of the wall  
For such as I to take or leave withal,  
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,  
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold  
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?  
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.  
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears  
have run

The colours from my life, and left so dead  
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done  
To give the same as pillow to thy head.  
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

## XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
"I love her for her smile—her look—her  
way

Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes  
brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—  
For these things in themselves, Belovèd,  
may

Be changed, or change for thee,—and love,  
so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love me  
for

Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks  
dry,—

A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love there-  
by!

But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

## XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,  
Because thou art more noble and like a  
king,

Thou canst prevail against my fears and  
fling

Thy purple round me, till my heart shall  
grow

Too close against thine heart henceforth  
to know

How it shook when alone. Why, conquer-  
ing

May prove as lordly and complete a thing  
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!  
And as a vanquished soldier yields his  
sword

To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,  
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,  
Here ends my strife. If thou invite me  
forth,

I rise above abasement at the word.  
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

## XX

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think  
That thou wast in the world a year ago,  
What time I sat alone here in the snow  
And saw no footprint, heard the silence  
sink

No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,  
Went counting all my chains as if that so  
They never could fall off at any blow  
Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus  
I drink

Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,  
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night  
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull  
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms  
white

Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,  
Who cannot guess God's presence out of  
sight.

## XXI

Say over again, and yet once over again,  
That thou dost love me. Though the word  
repeated  
Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost  
treat it,

Remember, never to the hill or plain,  
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain  
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green  
completed.

Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted  
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's  
pain.

Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!"  
Who can fear

Too many stars, though each in heaven  
shall roll,

Too many flowers, though each shall crown  
the year?

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me —  
toll

The silver iterance — only minding, Dear,  
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

## XXII

When our two souls stand up erect and  
strong,  
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and  
nigher,

Until the lengthening wings break into fire  
At either curved point,—what bitter wrong  
Can the earth do to us, that we should not  
long

Be here contented? Think. In mounting  
higher,

The angels would press on us and aspire  
To drop some golden orb of perfect song  
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay  
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit  
Contrarious moods of men recoil away  
And isolate pure spirits, and permit  
A place to stand and love in for a day,  
With darkness and the death-hour rounding  
it.

## XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,  
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?  
And would the sun for thee more coldly  
shine

Because of grave-damps falling round my  
head?

I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read  
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine —  
But . . . so much to thee? Can I pour  
thy wine

While my hands tremble? Then my soul,  
instead

Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower  
range.

Then, love me, Love! Look on me —  
breathe on me!

As brighter ladies do not count it strange,  
For love, to give up acres and degree,  
I yield the grave for thy sake, and ex-  
change

My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth  
with thee!

## XXVI

I lived with visions for my company  
Instead of men and women, years ago,  
And found them gentle mates, nor thought  
to know

A sweeter music than they played to me.  
But soon their trailing purple was not free  
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent  
grow,

And I myself grew faint and blind below  
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst  
come — to be,

Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining  
fronts,

Their songs, their splendours (better, yet  
the same,

As river-water hallowed into fonts),  
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame  
My soul with satisfaction of all wants:  
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams  
to shame.

## XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!  
And yet they seem alive and quivering  
Against my tremulous hands which loose  
the string

And let them drop down on my knee to-  
night.

This said, — he wished to have me in his  
sight

Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring  
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple  
thing,

Yet I wept for it! — this, . . . the paper's  
light . . .

Said, Dear, I love thee; and I sank and  
quailed

As if God's future thundered on my past.

This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has  
paled  
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.  
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill  
availed  
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

## xxxxII

The first time that the sun rose on thine  
oath  
To love me, I looked forward to the moon  
To slacken all those bonds which seemed  
too soon  
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.  
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly  
loathe;  
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one  
For such man's love!—more like an out-  
of-tune  
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth  
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched  
in haste,  
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.  
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed  
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may  
float  
'Neath master-hands, from instruments de-  
faced,—  
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and  
doat.

## xxxxV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange  
And be all to me? Shall I never miss  
Home-talk and blessing and the common  
kiss  
That comes to each in turn, nor count it  
strange,  
When I look up, to drop on a new range  
Of walls and floors, another home than  
this?  
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which  
is  
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know  
change?  
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,  
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things  
prove;  
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.  
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.  
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart  
wide,  
And fold within the wet wings of thy  
dove.

## xxxxVIII

First time he kissed me, he but only  
kissed  
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;  
And ever since, it grew more clean and  
white,  
Slow to world-greetings, quick with its  
"Oh, list,"

When the angels speak. A ring of ame-  
thyst  
I could not wear here, plainer to my  
sight,  
Than that first kiss. The second passed in  
height  
The first, and sought the forehead, and  
half missed,  
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!  
That was the chrism of love, which love's  
own crown,  
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.  
The third upon my lips was folded down  
In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,  
I have been proud and said, "My love, my  
own."

## xli

I thank all who have loved me in their  
hearts,  
With thanks and love from mine. Deep  
thanks to all  
Who paused a little near the prison-wall  
To hear my music in its louder parts  
Ere they went onward, each one to the  
mart's  
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.  
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall  
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's  
Own instrument didst drop down at thy  
foot  
To hearken what I said between my  
tears, . . .  
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to  
shoot  
My soul's full meaning into future years,  
That *they* should lend it utterance, and  
salute  
Love that endures, from Life that dis-  
appears!

## xlIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the  
ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and  
height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of  
sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's  
faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the  
breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God  
choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

## THE POET

[1850.]

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast  
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has  
viewed  
He views with the first glory. Fair and  
good  
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,  
But stand before him holy and undressed  
In week-day false conventions, such as  
would  
Drag other men down from the altitude  
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.  
Why, God would tire of all His heavens, as  
soon  
As thou, O Godlike, childlike poet, didst  
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and  
moon!  
And therefore hath he set thee in the midst  
Where men may hear thy wonder's cease-  
less tune  
And praise His world for ever, as thou  
bidst.

## A COURT LADY

[1860.]

HER hair was tawny with gold, her eyes  
with purple were dark,  
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and  
restless spark.  
Never was lady of Milan nobler in name  
and in race;  
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in  
the face.  
Never was lady on earth more true as  
woman and wife,  
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder  
in manners and life.  
She stood in the early morning, and said  
to her maidens "Bring  
That silken robe made ready to wear at the  
Court of the King.  
"Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid,  
clear of the mote,  
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp  
me the small at the throat.  
"Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds  
to fasten the sleeves,  
Laces to drop from their rays, like a  
powder of snow from the eaves."  
Gorgeous she entered the sunlight which  
gathered her up in a flame,  
While, straight in her open carriage, she  
to the hospital came.  
In she went at the door, and gazing from  
end to end,  
"Many and low are the pallets, but each  
is the place of a friend."

Up she passed through the wards, and stood  
at a young man's bed:  
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid  
the droop of his head.

"Art thou a Lombard, my brother? Happy  
art thou," she cried,  
And smiled like Italy on him: he dreamed  
in her face and died.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on  
still to a second:  
He was a grave hard man, whose years  
by dungeons were reckoned.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in  
his life were sorcer.  
"Art thou a Romagnole?" Her eyes drove  
lightnings before her.

"Austrian and priest had joined to double  
and tighten the cord  
Able to bind thee, O strong one,— free by  
the stroke of a sword.

"Now be grave for the rest of us, using the  
life overcast  
To ripen our wine of the present (too new)  
in glooms of the past."

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a  
face like a girl's,  
Young, and pathetic with dying,— a deep  
black hole in the curls.

"Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and  
seest thou, dreaming in pain,  
Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching  
the list of the slain?"

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his  
cheeks with her hands:  
"Blessed is she who has borne thee, al-  
though she should weep as she stands."

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm  
carried off by a ball:  
Kneeling,— "O more than my brother!  
how shall I thank thee for all?

"Each of the heroes around us has fought  
for his land and line,  
But thou hast fought for a stranger, in  
hate of a wrong not thine.

"Happy are all free peoples, too strong to  
be dispossessed.  
But blessed are those among nations who  
dare to be strong for the rest!"

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a  
couch where pined  
One with a face from Venetia, white with  
a hope out of mind.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the name,  
But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and came.

Only a tear for Venice?—she turned as in passion and loss,  
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were kissing the cross.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on then to another,  
Stern and strong in his death. "And dost thou suffer, my brother?"

Holding his hand in hers:—"Out of the Piedmont lion  
Cometh the sweetness of freedom! sweetest to live or to die on."

Holding his cold rough hands,—"Well, oh well have ye done  
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble alone."

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with a spring,—  
"That was a Piedmontese! and this is the Court of the King."

#### A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT [1860.]

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,  
Down in the reeds by the river?  
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,  
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,  
And breaking the golden lilies afloat  
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,  
From the deep cool bed of the river:  
The limpid water turbidly ran,  
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,  
And the dragon-fly had fled away,  
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan  
While turbidly flowed the river;  
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,  
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,  
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed  
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,  
(How tall it stood in the river!)  
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,  
Steadily from the outside ring,  
And notched the poor dry empty thing  
In holes, as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan

(Laughed while he sat by the river),  
"The only way, since gods began  
To make sweet music, they could succeed."  
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,

He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!

Piercing sweet by the river!  
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!  
The sun on the hill forgot to die,  
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly  
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,  
To laugh as he sits by the river,  
Making a poet out of a man:  
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—  
For the reed which grows nevermore again  
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

#### MOTHER AND POET

(TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA, 1861.)  
[1862.]

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea in the east,  
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.  
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast  
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,  
Let none look at me!

Yet I was a poetess only last year,  
And good at my art, for a woman, men said;  
But this woman, *this*, who is agonised here,  
—The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head  
For ever instead.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!

What art is she good at, but hurting her breast

With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?

Ah boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,  
And I proud, by that test.

What art's for a woman? To hold on her knees

Both darlings! to feel all their arms round her throat,

Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees  
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat little coat;

To dream and to doat.

To teach them . . . It stings there! I made them indeed  
Speak plain the word *country*. I taught them, no doubt,  
That a country's a thing men should die for at need.

I prated of liberty, rights, and about  
The tyrant cast out.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beautiful eyes! . . .  
I exulted; nay, let them go forth at the wheels  
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise  
When one sits quite alone! Then one weeps, then one kneels!  
God, how the house feels!

At first, happy news came, in gay letters moiled  
With my kisses,—of camp-life and glory, and how  
They both loved me; and, soon coming home to be spoiled  
In return would fan off every fly from my brow  
With their green laurel-bough.

Then was triumph at Turin: "Ancona was free!"  
And some one came out of the cheers in the street,  
With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.  
My Guido was dead! I fell down at his feet,  
While they cheered in the street.

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief looked sublime  
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained  
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time  
When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained  
To the height he had gained.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder, more strong,  
Writ now but in one hand, "I was not to faint,—  
One loved me for two — would be with me ere long:  
And *Viva l' Italia!* — he died for, our saint,  
Who forbids our complaint."

My Nanni would add, "he was safe, and aware  
Of a presence that turned off the balls,— was imprest

It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,  
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed  
To live on for the rest."

On which, without pause, up the telegraph-line  
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta: — *Shot.*  
*Tell his mother.* Ah, ah, "his," "their" mother, — not "mine,"  
No voice says "*My mother*" again to me.  
What!  
You think Guido forgot?

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,  
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?  
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven  
Through THAT Love and Sorrow which reconciled so  
The Above and Below.

O Christ of the five wounds who look'dst through the dark  
To the face of Thy mother! consider, I pray,  
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,  
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes turned away,  
And no last word to say!

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature.  
We all  
Have been patriots, yet each house must always keep one.  
'Twere an imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;  
And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done  
If we have not a son?

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?  
When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her sport  
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?  
When the guns of Cavalli with final report  
Have cut the game short?

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,  
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red,  
When you have your country from mountain to sea,  
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,  
(And I have my Dead) —

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring  
your bells low,  
And burn your lights faintly! My coun-  
try is *there*,  
Above the star pricked by the last peak of  
snow:  
My Italy's *THERE*, with my brave civic  
Pair,  
To disfranchise despair!

Forgive me. Some women bear children  
in strength,  
And bite back the cry of their pain in  
self-scorn;

But the birth-pangs of nations will wring  
us at length  
Into wail such as this—and we sit on  
forlorn  
When the man-child is born.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the  
east,  
And one of them shot in the west by the  
sea.  
Both! both my boys! If in keeping the  
feast  
You want a great song for your Italy  
free,  
Let none look at *me*!

# ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

(1819-1861)

## REVIVAL

[Composed 1839. — Published 1849.]

So I went wrong,  
Grievously wrong, but folly crushed itself,  
And vanity o'ertoppling fell, and time  
And healthy discipline and some neglect,  
Labour and solitary hours revived  
Somewhat, at least, of that original frame.  
Oh, well do I remember then the days  
When on some grassy slope (what time  
the sun  
Was sinking, and the solemn eve came  
down  
With its blue vapour upon field and wood  
And elm-embosomed spire) once more again  
I fed on sweet emotion, and my heart  
With love o'erflowed, or hushed itself in  
fear  
Unearthly, yea celestial. Once again  
My heart was hot within me, and, me-  
seemed,  
I too had in my body breath to wind  
The magic horn of song; I too possessed  
Up-welling in my being's depths a fount  
Of the true poet-nectar whence to fill  
The golden urns of verse.

## IN A LECTURE-ROOM

[Composed 1840. — Published 1849.]

AWAY, haunt thou not me,  
Thou vain Philosophy!  
Little hast thou bestead,  
Save to perplex the head,  
And leave the spirit dead.  
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,  
While from the secret treasure-depths be-  
low,  
Fed by the skyey shower,  
And clouds that sink and rest on hill-tops  
high,  
Wisdom at once, and Power,  
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, in-  
cessantly?  
Why labour at the dull mechanic oar,  
When the fresh breeze is blowing,  
And the strong current flowing,  
Right onward to the Eternal Shore?

## FROM BLANK MISGIVINGS

[Composed 1841. — Published 1849.]

NO. V

How OFTEN sit I, poring o'er  
My strange distorted youth,  
Seeking in vain, in all my store,  
One feeling based on truth;

Amid the maze of petty life  
A clue whereby to move,  
A spot whereon in toil and strife  
To dare to rest and love.  
So constant as my heart would be,  
So fickle as it must,  
'Twere well for others as for me  
'Twere dry as summer dust.  
Excitements come, and act and speech  
Flow freely forth; — but no,  
Nor they, nor ought beside can reach  
The buried world below.

*τὸ καλόν*

[Composed 1841. — Published 1849.]

I HAVE seen higher, holier things than  
these,  
And therefore must to these refuse my  
heart.  
Yet am I panting for a little ease;  
I'll take, and so depart.

Ah, hold! the heart is prone to fall away,  
Her high and cherished visions to forget,  
And if thou takest, how wilt thou repay  
So vast, so dread a debt?

How will the heart, which now thou trust-  
est, then  
Corrupt, yet in corruption mindful yet,  
Turn with sharp stings upon itself! Again,  
Bethink thee of the debt!

— Hast thou seen higher, holier things  
than these,  
And therefore must to these thy heart  
refuse?  
With the true best; alack, how ill agrees  
That best that thou wouldest choose!

The Summum Pulchrum rests in heaven  
above;  
Do thou, as best thou mayst, thy duty  
do:  
Amid the things allowed thee live and  
love;  
Some day thou shalt it view.

## QUA CURSUM VENTUS

[Published 1849.]

As SHIPS, becalmed at eve, that lay  
With canvas drooping, side by side,  
Two towers of sail at dawn of day  
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;

When fell the night, unsprung the breeze,  
And all the darkling hours they plied,  
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas  
By each was cleaving, side by side:

E'en so—but why the tale reveal  
Of those, whom year by year unchanged,  
Brief absence joined anew to feel,  
Astounded, soul from soul estranged?

At dead of night their sails were filled,  
And onward each rejoicing steered—  
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,  
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared!

To veer, how vain! On, onward strain,  
Brave barks! In light, in darkness too,  
Through winds and tides one compass  
guides—

To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze; and O great seas,  
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,  
On your wide plain they join again,  
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,  
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—  
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!  
At last, at last, unite them there!

### THE NEW SINAI

[Composed 1845.—Published 1869.]

Lo, HERE is God, and there is God!  
Believe it not, O Man;  
In such vain sort to this and that  
The ancient heathen ran:  
Though old Religion shake her head,  
And say in bitter grief,  
The day behold, at first foretold,  
Of atheist unbelief:  
Take better part, with manly heart,  
Thine adult spirit can;  
Receive it not, believe it not,  
Believe it not, O Man!

As men at dead of night awaked  
With cries, 'The king is here,'  
Rush forth and greet whome'er they meet,  
Whoe'er shall first appear;  
And still repeat, to all the street,  
'Tis he,—the king is here;'  
The long procession moveth on,  
Each nobler form they see,  
With changeful suit they still salute  
And cry, 'Tis he, 'tis he!

So, even so, when men were young,  
And earth and heaven were new,  
And His immediate presence He  
From human hearts withdrew,  
The soul perplexed and daily vexed  
With sensuous False and True,

Amazed, bereaved, no less believed,  
And fain would see Him too:  
'He is!' the prophet-tongues proclaimed;  
In joy and hasty fear,  
'He is!' aloud replied the crowd,  
'Is here, and here, and here.'

'He is! They are' in distance seen  
On yon Olympus high,  
In those Avernian woods abide,  
And walk this azure sky:  
'They are! They are'—to every show  
Its eyes the baby turned,  
And blazes sacrificial, tall,  
On thousand altars burned:  
'They are! They are'—On Sinai's top  
Far seen the lightnings shone,  
The thunder broke, a trumpet spoke,  
And God said, 'I am One.'

God spake it out, 'I, God, am One,'  
The unheeding ages ran,  
And baby-thoughts again, again,  
Have dogged the growing man:  
And as of old from Sinai's top  
God said that God is One,  
By Science strict so speaks He now  
To tell us, There is None!  
Earth goes by chemic forces; Heaven's  
A Mécanique Céleste!  
And heart and mind of human kind  
A watch-work as the rest!

Is this a Voice, as was the Voice,  
Whose speaking told abroad,  
When thunder pealed, and mountain reeled,  
The ancient truth of God?  
Ah, not the Voice; 'tis but the cloud,  
The outer darkness dense,  
Where image none, nor e'er was seen  
Similitude of sense.  
'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense  
That wrapt the Mount around;  
While in amaze the people stays,  
To hear the Coming Sound.

Is there no prophet-soul the while  
To dare, sublimely meek,  
Within the shroud of blackest cloud  
The Deity to seek?  
'Midst atheistic systems dark,  
And darker hearts' despair,  
That soul has heard perchance His word,  
And on the dusky air  
His skirts, as passed He by, to see  
Hath strained on their behalf,  
Who on the plain, with dance amain,  
Adore the Golden Calf.

'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense;  
Though blank the tale it tells,  
No God, no Truth! yet He, in sooth,  
Is there—within it dwells;  
Within the sceptic darkness deep  
He dwells that none may see.

Till idol forms and idol thoughts  
Have passed and ceased to be:  
No God, no Truth! ah, though, in sooth  
So stand the doctrine's half:  
On Egypt's track return not back,  
Nor own the Golden Calf.

Take better part, with manlier heart,  
Thine adult spirit can;  
No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er —  
Believe it ne'er — O Man!  
But turn not then to seek again  
What first the ill began;  
No God, it saith; ah, wait in faith  
God's self-completing plan;  
Receive it not, but leave it not,  
And wait it out, O Man!

'The Man that went the cloud within  
Is gone and vanished quite;  
He cometh not,' the people cries,  
'Nor bringeth God to sight:  
Lo these thy gods, that safety give,  
Adore and keep the feast!'  
Deluding and deluded cries  
The Prophet's brother-Priest:  
And Israel all bows down to fall  
Before the gilded beast.

Devout, indeed! that priestly creed,  
O Man, reject as sin;  
The clouded hill attend thou still,  
And him that went within.  
He yet shall bring some worthy thing  
For waiting souls to see:  
Some sacred word that he hath heard  
Their light and life shall be;  
Some lofty part, than which the heart  
Adopt no nobler can,  
Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe  
And thou shalt do, O Man!

### THE QUESTIONING SPIRIT

[Composed 1847. — Published 1862.]

THE human spirits saw I on a day,  
Sitting and looking each a different way;  
And hardly tasking, subtly questioning,  
Another spirit went around the ring  
To each and each: and as he ceased his  
say,  
Each after each, I heard them singly sing,  
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly  
low,  
We know not — what avails to know?  
We know not — wherefore need we know?  
This answer gave they still unto his suing.  
We know not, let us do as we are doing.  
Dost thou not know that these things only  
seem? —  
I know not, let me dream my dream.  
Are dust and ashes fit to make a treas-  
ure? —  
I know not, let me take my pleasure.

What shall avail the knowledge thou hast  
sought? —  
I know not, let me think my thought.  
What is the end of strife? —  
I know not, let me live my life.  
How many days or e'er thou mean'st to  
move? —

I know not, let me love my love.  
Were not things old once new? —  
I know not, let me do as others do.  
And when the rest were over past,  
I know not, I will do my duty, said the  
last.

Thy duty do? rejoined the voice,  
Ah, do it, do it, and rejoice;  
But shalt thou then, when all is done,  
Enjoy a love, embrace a beauty  
Like these, that may be seen and won  
In life, whose course will then be run;  
Or wilt thou be where there is none?  
I know not, I will do my duty.

And taking up the word around, above,  
below,  
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly  
low,  
We know not, sang they all, nor ever need  
we know;  
We know not, sang they, what avails to  
know?  
Whereat the questioning spirit, some short  
space,

Though unabashed, stood quiet in his place.  
But as the echoing chorus died away  
And to their dreams the rest returned  
apace,

By the one spirit I saw him kneeling low,  
And in a silvery whisper heard him say:  
Truly, thou know'st not, and thou need'st  
not know;

Hope only, hope thou, and believe alway;  
I also know not, and I need not know,  
Only with questionings pass I to and fro,  
Perplexing these that sleep, and in their  
folly

Imbreeding doubt and sceptic melancholy;  
Till that, their dreams deserting, they with  
me  
Come all to this true ignorance and thee.

### BETHESDA

A SEQUEL

[Composed 1849. — Published 1862.]

I SAW again the spirits on a day,  
Where on the earth in mournful case they  
lay;  
Five porches were there, and a pool, and  
round,  
Huddling in blankets, strewn upon the  
ground,

*Just after we left Egypt. The  
liberation song of an emancipated  
soul.*

Tied-up and bandaged, weary, sore, and spent,  
The maimed and halt, diseased and impotent.

For a great angel came, 'twas said, and stirred

The pool at certain seasons, and the word Was, with this people of the sick, that they

Who in the waters here their limbs should lay

Before the motion on the surface ceased Should of their torment straightway be released.

So with shrunk bodies and with heads down-dropt,

Stretched on the steps, and at the pillars propt,

Watching by day and listening through the night,

They filled the place, a miserable sight.

And I beheld that on the stony floor He too, that spoke of duty once before, No otherwise than others here to-day, Foredone and sick and sadly muttering lay.

I know not, I will do — what is it I would say?

What was that word which once sufficed alone for all,

Which now I seek in vain, and never can recall?

And then, as weary of in vain renewing His question, thus his mournful thought pursuing,

I know not, I must do as other men are doing.'

But what the waters of that pool might be, Of Lethe were they, or Philosophy; And whether he, long waiting, did attain Deliverance from the burden of his pain There with the rest; or whether, yet before, Some more diviner stranger passed the door

With his small company into that sad place, And breathing hope into the sick man's face,

Bade him take up his bed, and rise and go,

What the end were, and whether it were so,

Further than this I saw not, neither know.

#### FROM THE BOTHIE OF TOBER-NA-VUOLICH

(PART III, LINES 19-83.)

[Composed 1848. — Published 1848.]

THERE is a stream (I name not its name, lest inquisitive tourist Hunt it, and make it a lion, and get it at last into guide-books),

Springing far off from a loch unexplored in the folds of great mountains, Falling two miles through rowan and stunted alder, enveloped

Then for four more in a forest of pine, where broad and ample Spreads, to convey it, the glen with heathery slopes on both sides:

Broad and fair the stream, with occasional falls and narrows;

But, where the glen of its course approaches the vale of the river, Met and blocked by a huge interposing mass of granite,

Scarce by a channel deep-cut, raging up, and raging onward,

Forces its flood through a passage so narrow a lady would step it.

There, across the great rocky wharves, a wooden bridge goes,

Carrying a path to the forest; below, three hundred yards, say,

Lower in level some twenty-five feet, through flats of shingle, Stepping-stones and a cart-track cross in the open valley.

But in the interval here the boiling pent-up water

Frees itself by a final descent, attaining a basin,

Ten feet wide and eighteen long, with whiteness and fury

Occupied partly, but mostly pellucid, pure, a mirror;

Beautiful there for the colour derived from green rocks under;

Beautiful, most of all, where beads of foam uprising

Mingle their clouds of white with the delicate hue of the stillness,

Cliff over cliff for its sides, with rowan and pendent birch boughs,

Here it lies, unthought of above at the bridge and pathway,

Still more enclosed from below by wood and rocky projection.

You are shut in, left alone with yourself and perfection of water,

Hid on all sides, left alone with yourself and the goddess of bathing.

Here, the pride of the plunger, you stride the fall and clear it;

Here, the delight of the bather, you roll in beaded sparklings,

Here into pure green depth drop down from lofty ledges.

Hither, a month agone, they had come, and discovered it; hither

(Long a design, but long unaccountably left unaccomplished).

Leaving the well-known bridge and pathway above to the forest,

Turning below from the track of the carts over stone and shingle,

Piercing a wood, and skirting a narrow and  
natural causeway  
Under the rocky wall that hedges the bed  
of the streamlet,  
Rounded a craggy point, and saw on a  
sudden before them  
Slabs of rock, and a tiny beach, and per-  
fection of water,  
Picture-like beauty, seclusion sublime, and  
the goddess of bathing.  
There they bathed, of course, and Arthur,  
the Glory of headers,  
Leapt from the ledges with Hope, he  
twenty feet, he thirty;  
There, overbold, great Hobbes from a  
ten-foot height descended,  
Prone, as a quadruped, prone with hands  
and feet pretending;  
There in the sparkling champagne, ecstatic,  
they shrieked and shouted.  
'Hobbes's gutter' the Piper entitles the  
spot, profanely,  
Hope 'the Glory' would have, after Arthur,  
the Glory of headers:  
But, for before they departed, in shy and  
fugitive reflex,  
Here in the eddies and there did the splen-  
dour of Jupiter glimmer;  
Adam adjudged it the name of Hesperus,  
star of the evening.  
Hither, to Hesperus, now, the star of  
evening above them,  
Come in their lonelier walk the pupils twain  
and Tutor;  
Turned from the track of the carts, and  
passing the stone and shingle,  
Piercing the wood, and skirting the stream  
by the natural causeway,  
Rounded the craggy point, and now at  
their ease looked up; and  
Lo, on the rocky ledge, regardant, the  
Glory of headers,  
Lo, on the beach, expecting the plunge,  
not cigarless, the Piper,—  
And they looked, and wondered, incredulous,  
looking yet once more.  
Yes, it was he, on the ledge, bare-limbed,  
an Apollo, down-gazing,  
Eyeing one moment the beauty, the life, ere  
he flung himself in it,  
Eyeing through eddying green waters the  
green-tinted floor underneath them,  
Eyeing the bead on the surface, the bead,  
like a cloud rising to it,  
Drinking-in, deep in his soul, the beautiful  
hue and the clearness,  
Arthur, the shapely, the brave, the un-  
boasting, the Glory of headers;  
Yes, and with fragrant weed, by his knap-  
sack, spectator and critic,  
Seated on slab by the margin, the Piper,  
the Cloud-compeller.

## EASTER DAY

NAPLES, 1849

[Published 1869.]

THROUGH the great sinful streets of Na-  
ples as I past,  
With fiercer heat than flamed above my  
head  
My heart was hot within me; till at last  
My brain was lightened when my tongue  
had said—  
Christ is not risen!  
Christ is not risen, no—  
He lies and moulders low;  
Christ is not risen!  
What though the stone were rolled away,  
and though  
The grave found empty there?—  
If not there, then elsewhere;  
If not where Joseph laid Him first, why  
then  
Where other men  
Translaid Him after, in some humbler clay.  
Long ere today  
Corruption that sad perfect work hath  
done,  
Which here she scarcely, lightly had begun:  
The foul engendered worm  
Feeds on the flesh of the life-giving form  
Of our most Holy and Anointed One.  
He is not risen, no—  
He lies and moulders low;  
Christ is not risen!  
What if the women, ere the dawn was grey,  
Saw one or more great angels, as they say  
(Angels, or Him himself)? Yet neither  
there, nor then,  
Nor afterwards, nor elsewhere, nor at all,  
Hath He appeared to Peter or the Ten;  
Nor, save in thunderous terror, to bind  
Saul;  
Save in an after Gospel and late Creed,  
He is not risen, indeed,—  
Christ is not risen!  
Or, what if e'en, as runs a tale, the Ten  
Saw, heard, and touched, again and yet  
again?  
What if at Emmaüs' inn, and by Caper-  
naum's Lake,  
Came One, the bread that brake—  
Came One that spake as never mortal spake,  
And with them ate, and drank, and stood,  
and walked about?  
Ah! 'some' did well to 'doubt'!  
Ah! the true Christ, while these things  
came to pass,  
Nor heard, nor spake, nor walked, nor  
lived, alas!  
He was not risen, no—  
He lay and mouldered low,  
Christ was not risen!

As circulates in some great city crowd  
A rumour changeful, vague, importunate,  
and loud,  
From no determined centre, or of fact  
Or authorship exact,  
Which no man can deny  
Nor verify;  
So spread the wondrous fame;  
He all the same  
Lay senseless, mouldering, low:  
He was not risen, no—  
Christ was not risen!

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;  
As of the unjust, also of the just—  
Yea, of that Just One, too!  
This is the one sad Gospel that is true—  
Christ is not risen!

Is He not risen, and shall we not rise?  
Oh, we unwise!  
What did we dream, what wake we to discover?  
Ye hills, fall on us, and ye mountains, cover!  
In darkness and great gloom  
Come ere we thought it is *our* day of doom;  
From the cursed world, which is one tomb,  
Christ is not risen!

Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss:  
There is no heaven but this;  
There is no hell,  
Save earth, which serves the purpose doubly well,

Seeing it visits still  
With equallest apportionment of ill  
Both good and bad alike, and brings to one same dust  
The unjust and the just  
With Christ, who is not risen.

Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved:  
Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope  
We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,  
And most beliefless, that had most believed.  
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;  
As of the unjust, also of the just—  
Yea, of that Just one too!  
It is the one sad Gospel that is true—  
Christ is not risen!

Weep not beside the tomb,  
Ye women, unto whom  
He was great solace while ye tended Him;  
Ye who with napkin o'er the head  
And folds of linen round each wounded limb  
Laid out the Sacred Dead;  
And thou that bar'st Him in thy wondering womb;

Yea, Daughters of Jerusalem, depart,  
Bind up as best ye may your own sad bleeding heart:  
Go to your homes, your living children tend,  
Your earthly spouses love;  
Set your affections *not* on things above,  
Which moth and rust corrupt, which quickliest come to end:  
Or pray, if pray ye must, and pray, if pray ye can,  
For death; since dead is He whom ye deemed more than man,  
Who is not risen: no—  
But lies and moulders low—  
Who is not risen!

Ye men of Galilee!  
Why stand ye looking up to heaven, where  
Him ye ne'er may see,  
Neither ascending hence, nor returning hither again?

Ye ignorant and idle fishermen!  
Hence to your huts, and boats, and inland native shore,  
And catch not men, but fish;  
Whate'er things ye might wish,  
Him neither here nor there ye e'er shall meet with more.  
Ye poor deluded youths, go home,  
Mend the old nets ye left to roam,  
Tie the split oar, patch the torn sail:  
It was indeed an 'idle tale'—  
He was not risen!

And, oh, good men of ages yet to be,  
Who shall believe *because* ye did not see—  
Oh, be ye warned, be wise!  
No more with pleading eyes,  
And sobs of strong desire,  
Unto the empty vacant void aspire,  
Seeking another and impossible birth  
That is not of your own, and only mother earth.  
But if there is no other life for you,  
Sit down and be content, since this must even do:

He is not risen!  
One look, and then depart,  
Ye humble and ye holy men of heart;  
And ye! ye ministers and stewards of a Word  
Which ye would preach, because another heard—  
Ye worshippers of that ye do not know,  
Take these things hence and go:—  
He is not risen!

Here, on our Easter Day  
We rise, we come, and lo! we find Him not,  
Gardener nor other, on the sacred spot:

Where they have laid Him there is none  
to say;  
No sound, nor in, nor out — no word  
Of where to seek the dead or meet the living Lord.  
There is no glistering of an angel's wings,  
There is no voice of heavenly clear behest:  
Let us go hence, and think upon these things  
In silence, which is best.  
Is He not risen? No —  
But lies and moulders low?  
Christ is not risen?

## EASTER DAY

II

[Published 1869.]

So IN the sinful streets, abstracted and alone,  
I with my secret self held communing of mine own.  
So in the southern city spake the tongue  
Of one that somewhat overwildly sung,  
But in a later hour I sat and heard  
Another voice that spake — another graver word.  
Weep not, it bade, whatever hath been said,  
Though He be dead, He is not dead.  
In the true creed  
He is yet risen indeed;  
Christ is yet risen.

Weep not beside His tomb,  
Ye women unto whom  
He was great comfort and yet greater grief;  
Nor ye, ye faithful few that wont with  
Him to roam,  
Seek sadly what for Him ye left, go hopeless to your home;  
Nor ye despair, ye sharers yet to be of  
their belief;  
Though He be dead, He is not dead,  
Nor gone, though fled,  
Not lost, though vanished;  
Though He return not, though  
He lies and moulders low;  
In the true creed  
He is yet risen indeed;  
Christ is yet risen.

Sit if ye will, sit down upon the ground,  
Yet not to weep and wail, but calmly look around.  
Whate'er befell,  
Earth is not hell;  
Now, too, as when it first began,  
Life is yet life, and man is man.  
For all that breathe beneath the heaven's high cope,  
Joy with grief mixes, with despondence hope.

Hope conquers cowardice, joy grief:  
Or at least, faith unbelief.  
Though dead, not dead;  
Not gone, though fled;  
Not lost, though vanished.  
In the great gospel and true creed,  
He is yet risen indeed;  
Christ is yet risen.

## FROM DIPSYCHUS

[Composed 1849. — Published 1862.]

'There is no God,' the wicked saith,  
'And truly it's a blessing,  
For what He might have done with us  
It's better only guessing.'

'There is no God,' a youngster thinks,  
'Or really, if there may be,  
He surely didn't mean a man  
Always to be a baby.'

'There is no God, or if there is,'  
The tradesman thinks, 'twere funny  
If He should take it ill in me  
To make a little money.'

'Whether there be,' the rich man says,  
'It matters very little,  
For I and mine, thank somebody,  
Are not in want of victual.'

Some others, also, to themselves,  
Who scarce so much as doubt it,  
Think there is none, when they are well,  
And do not think about it.

But country folks who live beneath  
The shadow of the steeple;  
The parson and the parson's wife,  
And mostly married people;

Youths green and happy in first love,  
So thankful for illusion;  
And men caught out in what the world  
Calls guilt, in first confusion;

And almost every one when age,  
Disease, or sorrows strike him,  
Inclines to think there is a God,  
Or something very like Him.

## SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH

[Composed 1849. — Published 1862.]

SAY not the struggle nought availeth,  
The labour and the wounds are vain,  
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,  
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;  
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,  
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,  
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright.

### AH! YET CONSIDER IT AGAIN!

[Composed 1851. — Published 1862.]

'OLD things need not be therefore true,'  
O brother men, nor yet the new;  
Ah! still awhile the old thought retain,  
And yet consider it again!

The souls of now two thousand years  
Have laid up here their toils and fears,  
And all the earnings of their pain,—  
Ah, yet consider it again!

We! what do we see? each a space  
Of some few yards before his face;  
Does that the whole wide plan explain?  
Ah, yet consider it again!

Alas! the great world goes its way,  
And takes its truth from each new day;  
They do not quit, nor can retain,  
Far less consider it again.

### FROM SONGS IN ABSENCE

[Composed 1852. — Published 1862.]

YE flags of Piccadilly,  
Where I posted up and down,  
And wished myself so often  
Well away from you and town,—

Are the people walking quietly  
And steady on their feet,  
Cabs and omnibuses plying  
Just as usual in the street?

Do the houses look as upright  
As of old they used to be,  
And does nothing seem affected  
By the pitching of the sea?

Through the Green Park iron railings  
Do the quick pedestrians pass?  
Are the little children playing  
Round the plane-tree in the grass?

This squally wild north-wester  
With which our vessel fights,  
Does it merely serve with you to  
Carry up some paper kites?

Ye flags of Piccadilly,  
Which I hated so, I vow  
I could wish with all my heart  
You were underneath me now!

SOME future day when what is now is not,  
When all old faults and follies are forgot,  
And thoughts of difference passed like  
dreams away,  
We'll meet again, upon some future day.

When all that hindered, all that vexed our  
love,  
As tall rank weeds will climb the blade  
above,  
When all but it has yielded to decay,  
We'll meet again upon some future day.

When we have proved, each on his course  
alone,  
The wider world, and learnt what's now  
unknown,  
Have made life clear, and worked out each  
a way,  
We'll meet again,—we shall have much  
to say.

With happier mood, and feelings born  
anew,  
Our boyhood's bygone fancies we'll review,  
Talk o'er old talks, play as we used to play,  
And meet again, on many a future day.

Some day, which oft our hearts shall yearn  
to see,  
In some far year, though distant yet to be,  
Shall we indeed,—ye winds and waters,  
say!—  
Meet yet again, upon some future day?

WHERE lies the land to which the ship  
would go?  
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.  
And where the land she travels from?  
Away,  
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

On sunny noons upon the deck's smooth  
face,  
Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to  
pace;  
Or, o'er the stern reclining, watch below  
The foaming wake far widening as we go.

On stormy nights when wild north-westers  
rave,  
How proud a thing to fight with wind and  
wave!  
The dripping sailor on the reeling mast  
Exults to bear, and scorns to wish it  
past.

Where lies the land to which the ship  
would go?  
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.  
And where the land she travels from?  
Away,  
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

## HOPE EVERMORE AND BELIEVE!

[Published 1862.]

HOPE evermore and believe, O man, for e'en  
as thy thought

So are the things that thou see'st; e'en  
as thy hope and belief.

Cowardly art thou and timid? they rise to  
provoke thee against them;  
Hast thou courage? enough, see them  
exulting to yield.

Yea, the rough rock, the dull earth, the  
wild sea's furying waters  
(Violent say'st thou and hard, mighty  
thou think'st to destroy),

All with ineffable longing are waiting their  
Invader,

All, with one varying voice, call to him,  
Come and subdue;

Still for their Conqueror call, and, but for  
the joy of being conquered  
(Rapture they will not forego), dare to  
resist and rebel;

Still, when resisting and raging, in soft  
undervoice say unto him,  
Fear not, retire not, O man; hope ever-  
more and believe.

Go from the east to the west, as the sun  
and the stars direct thee,

Go with the girdle of man, go and  
encompass the earth.

Not for the gain of the gold; for the  
getting, the hoarding, the having,  
But for the joy of the deed; but for the  
Duty to do.

Go with the spiritual life, the higher vo-  
lition and action.

With the great girdle of God, go and  
encompass the earth.

Go; say not in thy heart, And what then  
were it accomplished,  
Were the wild impulse allayed, what  
were the use or the good!

Go, when the instinct is stilled, and when  
the deed is accomplished,

What thou hast done and shalt do, shall  
be declared to thee then.

Go with the sun and the stars, and yet  
evermore in thy spirit

Say to thyself: It is good: yet is there  
better than it.

This that I see is not all, and this that  
I do is but little;

Nevertheless it is good, though there is  
better than it.

## QUI LABORAT, ORAT

[Published 1862.]

O ONLY Source of all our light and life,  
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see  
and feel,

But whom the hours of mortal moral strife  
Alone aright reveal!

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,  
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;  
Chastised each rebel self-centred thought,  
My will adoreth Thine.

With eye down-dropt, if then this earthly  
mind

Speechless remain, or speechless e'en de-  
part;

Nor seek to see—for what of earthly kind  
Can see Thee as Thou art?—

If well-assured 'tis but profanely bold  
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to  
see,

It dare not dare the dread communion hold  
In ways unworthy Thee,

O not unowned, Thou shalt unnamed for-  
give,

In worldly walks the prayerless heart  
prepare;

And if in work its life it seem to live,  
Shalt make that work be prayer.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work  
it plies,

Unsummoned powers the blinding film  
shall part,

And scarce by happy tears made dim, the  
eyes

In recognition start.

But, as thou wildest, give or e'en forbear

The beatific supersensual sight,  
So, with Thy blessing blessed, that hum-  
bler prayer

Approach Thee morn and night.

## THE LATEST DECALOGUE

[Published 1862.]

THOU shalt have one God only; who  
Would be at the expense of two?  
No graven images may be  
Worshipped, except the currency:  
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse  
Thine enemy is none the worse:  
At church on Sunday to attend  
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:  
Honour thy parents; that is, all  
From whom advancement may befall:  
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive  
Officially to keep alive:  
Do not adultery commit;  
Advantage rarely comes of it:  
Thou shalt not steal; an emptyfeat,  
When it's so lucrative to cheat:  
Bear not false witness; let the lie  
Have time on its own wings to fly:  
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition  
Approves all forms of competition.

'WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABLE-  
NESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF  
TURNING'

[Published 1862.]

It fortifies my soul to know  
That, though I perish, Truth is so:  
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,  
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.  
I steadier step when I recall  
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

[Published 1862.]

WHAT we, when face to face we see  
The Father of our souls, shall be,  
John tells us, doth not yet appear;  
Ah! did he tell what we are here!

A mind for thoughts to pass into,  
A heart for loves to travel through,  
Five senses to detect things near,  
Is this the whole that we are here?

Rules baffle instincts—instincts rules,  
Wise men are bad—and good are fools,  
Facts evil—wishes vain appear,  
We cannot go, why are we here?

O may we for assurance' sake,  
Some arbitrary judgment take,  
And wilfully pronounce it clear,  
For this or that 'tis we are here?

Or is it right, and will it do,  
To pace the sad confusion through,  
And say:—it doth not yet appear,  
What we shall be, what we are here?

Ah yet, when all is thought and said,  
The heart still overrules the head;  
Still what we hope we must believe,  
And what is given us receive;

Must still believe, for still we hope  
That in a world of larger scope,  
What here is faithfully begun  
Will be completed, not undone.

My child, we still must think, when we  
That ampler life together see,  
Some true result will yet appear  
Of what we are, together, here.

ITE DOMUM SATURÆ, VENIT  
HESPERUS

[Published 1862.]

THE skies have sunk, and hid the upper  
snow  
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie),

The rainy clouds are filing fast below,  
And wet will be the path, and wet shall we.  
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

Ah dear, and where is he, a year agone,  
Who stepped beside and cheered us on and  
on?

My sweetheart wanders far away from me,  
In foreign land or on a foreign sea.  
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

The lightning zigzags shoot across the sky  
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie),

And through the vale the rains go sweeping  
by;

Ah me, and when in shelter shall we be?  
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

Cold, dreary cold, the stormy winds feel  
they

O'er foreign lands and foreign seas that  
stray

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie).

And doth he e'er, I wonder, bring to mind  
The pleasant huts and herds he left behind?  
And doth he sometimes in his slumbering  
see

The feeding kine, and doth he think of me,  
My sweetheart wandering wheresoe'er it  
be?

Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

The thunder bellows far from snow to  
snow

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie),

And loud and louder roars the flood below.  
Heigho! but soon in shelter shall we be:  
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

Or shall he find before his term be sped,  
Some comelier maid that he shall wish to  
wed?

(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie),

For weary is work, and weary day by day  
To have your comfort miles on miles away.  
Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

Or may it be that I shall find my mate,  
And he returning see himself too late?  
For work we must, and what we see, we  
see,

And God, He knows, and what must be,  
must be,

When sweethearts wander far away from  
me.

Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie.

The sky behind is brightening up anew  
(Home, Rose, and home, Provence and La  
Palie),

The rain is ending, and our journey too :  
Heigho! aha! for here at home are we :—  
In, Rose, and in, Provence and La Palie.

## THE HIDDEN LOVE

[Published 1869.]

O LET me love my love unto myself alone,  
And know my knowledge to the world un-  
known;  
No witness to my vision call,  
Beholding, unbeknown of all;  
And worship Thee, with Thee withdrawn  
apart,  
Whoe'er, Whate'er Thou art,  
Within the closest veil of mine own inmost  
heart.

What is it then to me  
If others are inquisitive to see?  
Why should I quit my place to go and ask  
If other men are working at their task?  
Leave my own buried roots to go  
And see that brother plants shall grow;  
And turn away from Thee, O Thou most  
Holy Light,  
To look if other orbs their orbits keep  
aright,  
Around their proper sun,  
Deserting Thee, and being undone.

O let me love my love unto myself alone,  
And know my knowledge to the world un-  
known;  
And worship Thee, O hid One, O much  
sought,  
As but man can or ought,  
Within the abstracted'st shrine of my least  
breathed-on thought.

Better it were, thou sayest, to consent;  
Feast while we may, and live ere life be  
spent;  
Close up clear eyes, and call the unstable  
sure,  
The unlovely lovely, and the filthy pure;  
In self-belyings, self-deceiving rolls,  
And lose in Action, Passion, Talk, the soul.

Nay, better far to mark off thus much air,  
And call it Heaven: place bliss and glory  
there;  
Fix perfect homes in the unsubstantial sky,  
And say, what is not, will be by and by.

'PERCHÈ PENSA? PENSANDO  
S'INVECCHIA'

[Published 1869.]

To SPEND uncounted years of pain,  
Again, again, and yet again,  
In working out in heart and brain  
The problem of our being here;  
To gather facts from far and near,  
Upon the mind to hold them clear,  
And, knowing more may yet appear,  
Unto one's latest breath to fear,  
The premature result to draw —  
Is this the object, end and law,  
And purpose of our being here?

## LIFE IS STRUGGLE

[Published 1869.]

To wear out heart, and nerves, and brain,  
And give oneself a world of pain;  
Be eager, angry, fierce, and hot,  
Imperious, supple — God knows what,  
For what's all one to have or not;  
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!  
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,  
It is not in itself a bliss,  
Only it is precisely this  
That keeps us all alive.

To say we truly feel the pain,  
And quite are sinking with the strain; —  
Entirely, simply, undeceived,  
Believe, and say we ne'er believed  
The object, e'en were it achieved,  
A thing we e'er had cared to keep;  
With heart and soul to hold it cheap,  
And then to go and try it again;  
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!  
O, 'tis not joy, and 'tis not bliss,  
Only it is precisely this  
That keeps us still alive.

## ALL IS WELL

[Published 1869.]

WHATE'ER you dream with doubt possest,  
Keep, keep it snug within your breast,  
And lay you down and take your rest;  
Forget in sleep the doubt and pain,  
And when you wake, to work again.  
The wind it blows, the vessel goes,  
And where and whither, no one knows.

'Twill all be well: no need of care;  
Though how it will, and when, and where,  
We cannot see, and can't declare.  
In spite of dreams, in spite of thought,  
'Tis not in vain, and not for nought,  
The wind it blows, the ship it goes,  
Though where and whither, no one knows.

# MATTHEW ARNOLD

(1822-1888)

## SONNET

[1849.]

ONE lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee —  
One lesson which in every wind is blown;  
One lesson of two duties kept at one  
Though the loud world proclaim their  
enmity —  
Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!  
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows  
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in re-  
pose,  
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!  
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords  
ring,  
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,  
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,  
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting:  
Still working, blaming still our vain tur-  
moil;  
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is  
gone.

## MYCERINUS

[1849.]

'After Chephren, Mycerinus, son of Cheops, reigned over Egypt. He abhorred his father's courses, and judged his subjects more justly than any of their kings had done. — To him there came an oracle from the city of Buto, to the effect, that he was to live but six years longer, and to die in the seventh year from that time.' —HERODOTUS.

'Nor by the justice that my father spurn'd,  
Not for the thousands whom my father  
slew,  
Altars unfed and temples overturn'd,  
Cold hearts and thankless tongues, where  
thanks were due;  
Fell this late voice from lips that cannot  
lie,  
Stern sentence of the Powers of Destiny.

I will unfold my sentence and my crime.  
My crime, that, rapt in reverential awe,  
I sate obedient, in the fiery prime  
Of youth, self-govern'd, at the feet of  
Law;

Ennobling this dull pomp, the life of kings,  
By contemplation of diviner things.

My father lov'd injustice, and liv'd long;  
Crown'd with grey hairs he died, and full  
of sway.

I lov'd the good he scorn'd, and hated  
wrong:

The Gods declare my recompense to-day.

I look'd for life more lasting, rule more  
high;  
And when six years are measur'd, lo, I die!  
Yet surely, O my people, did I deem  
Man's justice from the all-just Gods was  
given:  
A light that from some upper fount did  
beam,  
Some better archetype, whose seat was  
heaven;  
A light that, shining from the blest abodes,  
Did shadow somewhat of the life of Gods.  
Mere phantoms of man's self-tormenting  
heart,  
Which on the sweets that woo it dares not  
feed:  
Vain dreams, that quench our pleasures,  
then depart,  
When the dup'd soul, self-master'd, claims  
its meed:  
When, on the strenuous just man, Heaven  
bestows,  
Crown of his struggling life, an unjust  
close.  
Seems it so light a thing then, austere Pow-  
ers,  
To spurn man's common lure, life's plea-  
sant things?  
Seems there no joy in dances crown'd with  
flowers,  
Love, free to range, and regal banqueting?  
Bend ye on these, indeed, an unmov'd eye,  
Not Gods but ghosts, in frozen apathy?  
Or is it that some Power, too wise, too  
strong,  
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile,  
Whirls earth, and heaven, and men, and  
gods along,  
Like the broad rushing of the insurged  
Nile?  
And the great powers we serve, themselves  
may be  
Slaves of a tyrannous Necessity?  
Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden  
cars,  
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing  
their flight,  
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of  
stars,  
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the  
night?

Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling  
sheen,  
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell  
serene?

Oh wherefore cheat our youth, if thus it be,  
Of one short joy, one lust, one pleasant  
dream?

Stringing vain words of powers we cannot  
see,  
Blind divinations of a will supreme;  
Lost labour: when the circumambient  
gloom  
But hides, if Gods, Gods careless of our  
doom?

The rest I give to joy. Even while I  
speak  
My sand runs short; and as yon star-shot  
ray,  
Hemm'd by two banks of cloud, peers  
pale and weak,  
Now, as the barrier closes, dies away;  
Even so do past and future intertwine,  
Blotting this six years' space, which yet is  
mine.

Six years — six little years — six drops of  
time —  
Yet suns shall rise, and many moons shall  
wane,  
And old men die, and young men pass their  
prime,  
And languid Pleasure fade and flower  
again;  
And the dull Gods behold, ere these are  
flown,  
Revels more deep, joy keener than their  
own.

Into the silence of the groves and woods  
I will go forth; but something would I  
say —  
Something — yet what I know not: for the  
Gods  
The doom they pass revoke not, nor delay;  
And prayers, and gifts, and tears, are  
fruitless all,  
And the night waxes, and the shadows  
fall.

Ye men of Egypt, ye have heard your  
king.  
I go, and I return not. But the will  
Of the great Gods is plain; and ye must  
bring  
Ill deeds, ill passions, zealous to fulfil  
Their pleasure, to their feet; and reap  
their praise.  
The praise of Gods, rich boon! and length  
of days'.

— So spake he, half in anger, half in  
scorn;  
And one loud cry of grief and of amaze

Broke from his sorrowing people: so he  
spake;  
And turning, left them there; and with  
brief pause,  
Girt with a throng of revellers, bent his  
way  
To the cool region of the groves he lov'd.  
There by the river banks he wander'd on,  
From palm-grove on to palm-grove, happy  
trees,  
Their smooth tops shining sunwards, and  
beneath  
Burying their unsunn'd stems in grass and  
flowers:  
Where in one dream the feverish time of  
Youth  
Might fade in slumber, and the feet of  
Joy  
Might wander all day long and never tire:  
Here came the king, holding high feast,  
at morn,  
Rose-crown'd; and ever, when the sun  
went down,  
A hundred lamps beam'd in the tranquil  
gloom,  
From tree to tree, all through the twinkling  
grove,  
Revealing all the tumult of the feast,  
Flush'd guests, and golden goblets, foam'd  
with wine;  
While the deep-burnish'd foliage overhead  
Splinter'd the silver arrows of the moon.  
It may be that sometimes his wondering  
soul  
From the loud joyful laughter of his  
lips  
Might shrink half startled, like a guilty  
man  
Who wrestles with his dream; as some  
pale Shape,  
Gliding half hidden through the dusky  
stems,  
Would thrust a hand before the lifted  
bowl,  
Whispering, 'A little space, and thou art  
mine.'  
It may be on that joyless feast his eye  
Dwelt with mere outward seeming; he,  
within,  
Took measure of his soul, and knew its  
strength,  
And by that silent knowledge, day by day,  
Was calm'd, ennobled, comforted, sus-  
tain'd.  
It may be; but not less his brow was  
smooth,  
And his clear laugh fled ringing through  
the gloom,  
And his mirth quail'd not at the mild  
reproof  
Sigh'd out by Winter's sad tranquillity;  
Nor, pall'd with its own fulness, ebb'd and  
died

In the rich languor of long summer days;  
Nor wither'd, when the palm-tree plumes  
that roof'd  
With their mild dark his grassy banquet-hall,  
Bent to the cold winds of the showerless Spring;  
No, nor grew dark when Autumn brought the clouds.  
So six long years he revell'd, night and day;  
And when the mirth wax'd loudest, with dull sound  
Sometimes from the grove's centre echoes came,  
To tell his wondering people of their king;  
In the still night, across the steaming flats,  
Mix'd with the murmur of the moving Nile.

## TO A FRIEND

[1849.]

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?  
He much, the old man, who, clearest-soul'd of men,  
Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen,  
And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though blind.  
Much he, whose friendship I not long since won,  
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son  
Clear'd Rome of what most sham'd him. But be his  
My special thanks, whose even-balanc'd soul,  
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,  
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:  
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole: The mellow glory of the Attic stage;  
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

## THE SICK KING IN BOKHARA

[1849.]

## HUSSEIN

O most just Vizier, send away  
The cloth-merchants, and let them be.  
Them and their dues, this day: the King  
Is ill at ease, and calls for thee.

## THE VIZIER

O merchants, tarry yet a day  
Here in Bokhara: but at noon  
To-morrow, come, and ye shall pay  
Each fortieth web of cloth to me;  
As the law is, and go your way.

O Hussein, lead me to the King.  
Thou teller of sweet tales, thine own,  
Ferdousi's, and the others', lead.  
How is it with my lord?

## HUSSEIN

## Alone

Ever since prayer-time, he doth wait,  
O Vizier, without lying down,  
In the great window of the gate,  
Looking into the Registān:  
Where through the sellers' booths the slaves  
Are this way bringing the dead man.  
O Vizier, here is the King's door.

## THE KING

O Vizier, I may bury him?

## THE VIZIER

O King, thou know'st, I have been sick  
These many days, and heard no thing,  
(For Allah shut my ears and mind)  
Not even what thou dost, O King.  
Wherefore, that I may counsel thee,  
Let Hussein, if thou wilt, make haste  
To speak in order what hath chanc'd.

## THE KING

O Vizier, be it as thou say'st.

## HUSSEIN

Three days since, at the time of prayer,  
A certain Moollah, with his robe  
All rent, and dust upon his hair,  
Watch'd my lord's coming forth, and push'd  
The golden mace-bearers aside,  
And fell at the King's feet, and cried,  
'Justice, O King, and on myself!  
On this great sinner, who hath broke  
The law, and by the law must die!  
Vengeance, O King!'

## But the King spoke:

'What fool is this, that hurts our ears  
With folly? or what drunken slave?  
My guards, what, prick him with your spears!

Prick me the fellow from the path!'  
As the King said, so was it done,  
And to the mosque my lord pass'd on.

But on the morrow, when the King  
Went forth again, the holy book  
Carried before him, as is right,  
And through the square his path he took;  
My man comes running, fleck'd with blood  
From yesterday, and falling down  
Cries out most earnestly: 'O King.  
My lord, O King, do right, I pray!

'How canst thou, ere thou hear, discern  
If I speak folly? but a king,  
Whether a thing be great or small,  
Like Allah, hears and judges all.'

'Wherefore hear thou! Thou know'st, how fierce

In these last days the sun hath burn'd:  
That the green water in the tanks  
Is to a putrid puddle turn'd:  
And the canal, that from the stream  
Of Samarcand is brought this way  
Wastes, and runs thinner every day.

'Now I at nightfall had gone forth  
Alone, and in a darksome place  
Under some mulberry trees I found  
A little pool; and in brief space  
With all the water that was there  
I fill'd my pitcher, and stole home  
Unseen: and having drink to spare,  
I hid the can behind the door,  
And went up on the roof to sleep.

'But in the night, which was with wind  
And burning dust, again I creep  
Down, having fever, for a drink.

'Now meanwhile had my brethren found  
The water-pitcher, where it stood  
Behind the door upon the ground,  
And call'd my mother: and they all,  
As they were thirsty, and the night  
Most sultry, drain'd the pitcher there;  
That they sate with it, in my sight,  
Their lips still wet, when I came down.

'Now mark! I, being fever'd, sick,  
(Most unblest also) at that sight  
Brake forth and curs'd them — dost thou  
hear? —

One was my mother — Now, do right!

But my lord mus'd a space, and said:  
'Send him away, Sirs, and make on.  
It is some madman,' the King said:  
As the King said, so was it done.

The morrow at the self-same hour  
In the King's path, behold, the man,  
Not kneeling, sternly fix'd: he stood  
Right opposite, and thus began,  
Frowning grim down: — 'Thou wicked  
King,  
Most deaf where thou shouldst most give  
ear!

What, must I howl in the next world,  
Because thou wilt not listen here?

'What, wilt thou pray, and get thee grace,  
And all grace shall to me be grudg'd?  
Nay but, I swear, from this thy path  
I will not stir till I be judg'd.'

Then they who stood about the King  
Drew close together and conferr'd:  
Till that the King stood forth and said,  
'Before the priests thou shalt be heard.'

But when the Ulemas were met  
And the thing heard, they doubted not;  
But sentenc'd him, as the law is,  
To die by stoning on the spot.

Now the King charg'd us secretly:  
'Ston'd must he be, the law stands so:  
Yet, if he seek to fly, give way:  
Forbid him not, but let him go.'

So saying, the King took a stone,  
And cast it softly: but the man,  
With a great joy upon his face,  
Kneel'd down, and cried not, neither ran.

So they, whose lot it was, cast stones;  
That they flew thick, and bruis'd him sore:  
But he prais'd Allah with loud voice,  
And remain'd kneeling as before.

My lord had covered up his face:  
But when one told him, 'He is dead,'  
Turning him quickly to go in.  
'Bring thou to me his corpse,' he said.

And truly, while I speak, O King,  
I hear the bearers on the stair.  
Wilt thou they straightway bring him in?  
— Ho! enter ye who tarry there!

#### THE VIZIER

O King, in this I praise thee not.  
Now must I call thy grief not wise.  
Is he thy friend, or of thy blood,  
To find such favour in thine eyes?

Nay, were he thine own mother's son,  
Still, thou art king, and the Law stands.  
It were not meet the balance swerv'd,  
The sword were broken in thy hands.

But being nothing, as he is,  
Why for no cause make sad thy face?  
Lo, I am old: three kings, ere thee,  
Have I seen reigning in this place.

But who, through all this length of time,  
Could bear the burden of his years,  
If he for strangers pain'd his heart  
Not less than those who merit tears?

Fathers we *must* have, wife and child;  
And grievous is the grief for these:  
This pain alone, which *must* be borne,  
Makes the head white, and bows the knees.

But other loads than this his own  
One man is not well made to bear.  
Besides, to each are his own friends,  
To mourn with him, and show him care.

Look, this is but one single place,  
Though it be great: all the earth round,  
If a man bear to have it so,  
Things which might vex him shall be found.

Upon the Russian frontier, where  
The watchers of two armies stand  
Near one another, many a man,  
Seeking a prey unto his hand,

Hath snatch'd a little fair-hair'd slave:  
They snatch also, towards Mervè,  
The Shiah dogs, who pasture sheep,  
And up from thence to Orgunjè.

And these all, labouring for a lord,  
Eat not the fruit of their own hands:  
Which is the heaviest of all plagues,  
To that man's mind, who understands.

The kaffirs also (whom God curse!)  
Vex one another, night and day:  
There are the lepers, and all sick:  
There are the poor, who faint alway.

All these have sorrow, and keep still,  
Whilst other men make cheer, and sing.  
Wilt thou have pity on all these?  
No, nor on this dead dog, O King!

#### THE KING

O Vizier, thou art old, I young.  
Clear in these things I cannot see.  
My head is burning; and a heat  
Is in my skin, which angers me.

But hear ye this, ye sons of men!  
They that bear rule, and are obey'd,  
Unto a rule more strong than theirs  
Are in their turn obedient made.

In vain therefore, with wistful eyes  
Gazing up hither, the poor man,  
Who loiters by the high-heap'd booths,  
Below there, in the Registān,

Says, 'Happy he, who lodges there!  
With silken raiment, store of rice,  
And for this drought, all kinds of fruits,  
Grape syrup, squares of colour'd ice,

'With cherries serv'd in drifts of snow.'  
In vain hath a king power to build  
Houses, arcades, enamell'd mosques;  
And to make orchard closes, fill'd

With curious fruit trees, bought from far;  
With cisterns for the winter rain;  
And in the desert, spacious inns  
In divers places; — if that pain

Is not more lighten'd, which he feels,  
If his will be not satisfied:  
And that it be not, from all time  
The Law is planted, to abide.

Thou wert a sinner, thou poor man! .  
Thou wert athirst; and didst not see,  
That, though we snatch what we desire,  
We must not snatch it eagerly.

And I have meat and drink at will,  
And rooms of treasures, not a few.  
But I am sick, nor heed I these:  
And what I would, I cannot do.

Even the great honour which I have,  
When I am dead, will soon grow still.  
So have I neither joy, nor fame.  
But what I can do, that I will.

I have a fretted brick-work tomb  
Upon a hill on the right hand,  
Hard by a close of apricots,  
Upon the road of Samarcand.

Thither, O Vizier, will I bear  
This man my pity could not save:  
And, tearing up the marble flags,  
There lay his body in my grave.

Bring water, nard, and linen rolls.  
Wash off all blood, set smooth each limb,  
Then say: 'He was not wholly vile,  
Because a king shall bury him.'

#### SHAKESPEARE

[1849.]

OTHERS abide our question, Thou art free.  
We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,  
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest  
hill

That to the stars uncrowns his majesty,  
Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,  
Making the Heaven of Heavens his dwell-  
ing-place,

Spares but the cloudy border of his base  
To the foil'd searching of mortality:  
And thou, who didst the stars and sun-  
beams know,  
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd,  
self-secure,  
Didst walk on Earth unguess'd at. Better  
so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness that impairs, all griefs that  
bow,  
Find their sole voice in that victorious  
brow.

#### TO AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER

WHO PREACHED THAT WE SHOULD BE 'IN  
HARMONY WITH NATURE'

[1849.]

'In harmony with Nature?' Restless fool,  
Who with such heat dost preach what  
were to thee,  
When true, the last impossibility;

To be like Nature strong, like Nature  
cool: —  
Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but  
more,

And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.  
Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:  
Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:  
Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:

Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;  
 Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.  
 Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;  
 Nature and man can never be fast friends.  
 Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

## TO A REPUBLICAN FRIEND, 1848

[1849.]

God knows it, I am with you. It to prize  
 Those virtues, priz'd and practis'd by too few,  
 But priz'd, but lov'd, but eminent in you,  
 Man's fundamental life: if to despise  
 The barren optimistic sophistries  
 Of comfortable moles, whom what they do  
 Teaches the limit of the just and true —  
 And for such doing have no need of eyes:  
 If sadness at the long heart-wasting show  
 Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted:  
 If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow  
 The armies of the homeless and unfed: —  
 If these are yours, if this is what you are,  
 Then am I yours, and what you feel, I share.

## CONTINUED

YET, when I muse on what life is, I seem  
 Rather to patience prompted, than that proud  
 Prospect of hope which France proclaims so loud,  
 France, fam'd in all great arts, in none supreme.  
 Seeing this Vale, this Earth, whereon we dream,  
 Is on all sides o'ershadow'd by the high  
 Uno'erleap'd Mountains of Necessity,  
 Sparing us narrower margin than we deem.  
 Nor will that day dawn at a human nod,  
 When, bursting through the network superpos'd  
 By selfish occupation — plot and plan,  
 Lust, avarice, envy — liberated man,  
 All difference with his fellow man compos'd,  
 Shall be left standing face to face with God.

## TO FAUSTA

[1849.]

Joy comes and goes: hope ebbs and flows,  
 Like the wave.  
 Change doth unknit the tranquil strength of men.  
 Love lends life a little grace,  
 A few sad smiles: and then,  
 Both are laid in one cold place,  
 In the grave.

Dreams dawn and fly: friends smile and die,  
 Like spring flowers.  
 Our vaunted life is one long funeral.  
 Men dig graves, with bitter tears,  
 For their dead hopes; and all,  
 Maz'd with doubts, and sick with fears,  
 Count the hours.

We count the hours: these dreams of ours,  
 False and hollow,  
 Shall we go hence and find they are not dead?

Joys we dimly apprehend  
 Faces that smil'd and fled,  
 Hopes born here, and born to end,  
 Shall we follow?

## THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

[1849.]

COME, dear children, let us away;  
 Down and away below.  
 Now my brothers call from the bay;  
 Now the great winds shorewards blow;  
 Now the salt tides seawards flow;  
 Now the wild white horses play,  
 Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.  
 Children dear, let us away.  
 This way, this way.

Call her once before you go.  
 Call once yet.  
 In a voice that she will know:  
 'Margaret! Margaret!'  
 Children's voices should be dear  
 (Call once more) to a mother's ear:  
 Children's voices, wild with pain.  
 Surely she will come again.  
 Call her once and come away.  
 This way, this way.  
 'Mother dear, we cannot stay.'  
 The wild white horses foam and fret.  
 Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down.  
 Call no more.  
 One last look at the white-wall'd town,  
 And the little grey church on the windy shore.  
 Then come down.  
 She will not come though you call all day  
 Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday  
 We heard the sweet bells over the bay?  
 In the caverns where we lay,  
 Through the surf and through the swell,  
 The far-off sound of a silver bell?  
 Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,  
 Where the winds are all asleep;  
 Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;  
 Where the salt weed sways in the stream;

Where the sea-beasts rang'd all round  
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;  
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,  
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;  
Where great whales come sailing by,  
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,  
Round the world for ever and ay?  
When did music come this way?  
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday  
(Call yet once) that she went away?  
Once she sate with you and me,  
On a red gold throne in the heart of the  
sea,  
And the youngest sate on her knee.  
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended  
it well,  
When down swung the sound of the far-  
off bell.  
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear  
green sea.

She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray  
In the little grey church on the shore to-day.  
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!  
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here  
with thee.'

I said; 'Go up, dear heart, through the  
waves.  
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind  
sea-caves.'  
She smil'd, she went up through the surf  
in the bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?  
'The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.  
Long prayers,' I said, 'in the world they  
say.

Come,' I said, and we rose through the surf  
in the bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down  
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-  
wall'd town.

Through the narrow pav'd streets, where  
all was still,  
To the little grey church on the windy hill.  
From the church came a murmur of folk  
at their prayers,  
But we stood without in the cold blowing  
airs.

We climb'd on the graves, on the stones,  
worn with rains,  
And we gaz'd up the aisle through the  
small leaded panes.

She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:  
'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here.  
Dear heart,' I said, 'we are long alone.  
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'  
But, ah, she gave me never a look,  
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book.  
'Loud prays the priest; shut stands the  
door.'

Come away, children, call no more.  
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down.  
Down to the depths of the sea.  
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,  
Singing most joyfully.  
Hark, what she sings; 'O joy, O joy,  
For the humming street, and the child with  
its toy.  
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy  
well.  
For the wheel where I spun,  
And the blessed light of the sun.'  
And so she sings her fill,  
Singing most joyfully,  
Till the shuttle falls from her hand,  
And the whizzing wheel stands still.  
She steals to the window, and looks at the  
sand;  
And over the sand at the sea;  
And her eyes are set in a stare;  
And anon there breaks a sigh,  
And anon there drops a tear,  
From a sorrow-clouded eye,  
And a heart sorrow-laden,  
A long, long sigh,  
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mer-  
maiden,  
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children.  
Come children, come down,  
The hoarse wind blows colder;  
Lights shine in the town.  
She will start from her slumber  
When gusts shake the door;  
She will hear the winds howling,  
Will hear the waves roar.  
We shall see, while above us  
The waves roar and whirl,  
A ceiling of amber,  
A pavement of pearl.  
Singing, 'Here came a mortal,  
But faithless was she.  
And alone dwell for ever  
The kings of the sea.'

But, children, at midnight,  
When soft the winds blow;  
When clear falls the moonlight;  
When spring-tides are low:  
When sweet airs come seaward  
From heaths starr'd with broom;  
And high rocks throw mildly  
On the blanch'd sands a gloom:  
Up the still, glistening beaches,  
Up the creeks we will hie;  
Over banks of bright seaweed  
The ebb-tide leaves dry.  
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,  
At the white, sleeping town;  
At the church on the hill-side—  
And then come back down.  
Singing, 'There dwells a lov'd one,  
But cruel is she.  
She left lonely for ever  
The kings of the sea.'

## ISOLATION

[1852.]

YES: in the sea of life enisl'd,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
We mortal millions live *alone*.  
The islands feel the encircling flow,  
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights  
And they are swept by balms of spring,  
And in their glens, on starry nights,  
The nightingales divinely sing,  
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,  
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair  
Is to their farthest caverns sent;  
— For surely once, they feel, we were  
Parts of a single continent.  
Now round us spreads the watery plain —  
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire  
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?  
Who renders vain their deep desire?

A God, a God their severance rul'd;  
And bade betwixt their shores to be  
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

## DESPONDENCY

[1852.]

THE thoughts that rain their steady glow  
Like stars on life's cold sea,  
Which others know, or say they know —  
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,  
But they will not remain.  
They light me once, they hurry by,  
And never come again.

## SELF-DECEPTION

[1852.]

SAY, what blinds us, that we claim the glory  
Of possessing powers not our share? —  
Since man woke on earth, he knows his  
story,  
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit  
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasures of God:  
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit;  
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager Being  
Strain'd, and long'd, and grasp'd each gift  
it saw.

Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing  
Stav'd us back, and gave our choice the law,

Ah, whose hand that day through heaven  
guided

Man's new spirit, since it was not we?  
Ah, who sway'd our choice, and who de-  
cided

What our gifts, and what our wants should  
be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining  
Shreds of gifts which he refus'd in full.  
Still these waste us with their hopeless  
straining —  
Still the attempt to use them proves them  
null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;  
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.  
Ah, and he, who placed our master-feeling,  
Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for  
powers.

Ends we seek we never shall attain.  
Ah, some power exists there, which is  
ours?

Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

## TRISTRAM AND ISEULT

[1852. The version of 1857 is here reprinted.]

'In the court of his uncle King Marc, the king of Cornwall, who at this time resided at the castle of Tyntagel, Tristram became expert in all knightly exercises. — The king of Ireland, at Tristram's solicitations, promised to bestow his daughter Iseult in marriage on King Marc. The mother of Iseult gave to her daughter's confidante a philtre, or love-potion, to be administered on the night of her nuptials. Of this beverage Tristram and Iseult, on their voyage to Cornwall, unfortunately partook. Its influence, during the remainder of their lives, regulated the affections and destiny of the lovers.'

'After the arrival of Tristram and Iseult in Cornwall, and the nuptials of the latter with King Marc, a great part of the romance is occupied with their contrivances to procure secret interviews. — Tristram, being forced to leave Cornwall, on account of the displeasure of his uncle, repaired to Brittany, where lived Iseult with the White Hands. — He married her — more out of gratitude than love. — Afterwards he proceeded to the dominions of Arthur, which became the theatre of unnumbered exploits.'

'Tristram, subsequent to these events, returned to Brittany, and to his long-neglected wife. There, being wounded and sick, he was soon reduced to the lowest ebb. In this situation, he dispatched a confidant to the queen of Cornwall, to try if he could induce her to follow him to Brittany,' &c. — DUNLOP'S *History of Fiction*.

## I

## TRISTRAM

## TRISTRAM

Is SHE not come? The messenger was  
sure.

Prop me upon the pillows once again —  
Raise me, my Page: this cannot long en-  
dure,

Christ! what a night! how the sleet whips  
the pane!  
What lights will those out to the north-  
ward be?

## THE PAGE

The lanterns of the fishing-boats at sea.

## TRISTRAM

Soft—who is that stands by the dying  
fire?

## THE PAGE

Iseult.

## TRISTRAM

Ah! not the Iseult I desire.

What Knight is this, so weak and pale,  
Though the locks are yet brown on his  
noble head,

Propt on pillows in his bed,  
Gazing seawards for the light  
Of some ship that fights the gale  
On this wild December night?  
Over the sick man's feet is spread  
A dark green forest dress.  
A gold harp leans against the bed,  
Ruddy in the fire's light.

I know him by his harp of gold,  
Famous in Arthur's court of old:  
I know him by his forest dress.

The peerless hunter, harper, knight—  
Tristram of Lyons.

What Lady is this, whose silk attire  
Gleams so rich in the light of the fire?  
The ringlets on her shoulders lying  
In their flitting lustre vying  
With the clasp of burnish'd gold  
Which her heavy robe doth hold.  
Her looks are mild, her fingers slight  
As the driven snow are white;  
And her cheeks are sunk and pale.

Is it that the bleak sea-gale  
Beating from the Atlantic sea  
On this coast of Brittany,  
Nips too keenly the sweet Flower?

Is it that a deep fatigue  
Hath come on her, a chilly fear,.  
Passing all her youthful hour  
Spinning with her maidens here,  
Listlessly through the window bars  
Gazing seawards many a league  
From her lonely shore-built tower,  
While the knights are at the wars?

Or, perhaps, has her young heart  
Felt already some deeper smart,  
Of those that in secret the heart-strings  
rive,

Leaving her sunk and pale, though fair?

Who is this snowdrop by the sea?  
I know her by her mildness rare,  
Her snow-white hands, her golden hair;  
I know her by her rich silk dress,

And her fragile loveliness.  
The sweetest Christian soul alive,  
Iseult of Brittany.

Iseult of Brittany? — but where  
Is that other Iseult fair,  
That proud, first Iseult, Cornwall's queen?  
She, whom Tristram's ship of yore  
From Ireland to Cornwall bore,  
To Tytagel, to the side  
Of King Marc, to be his bride?  
She who, as they voyag'd, quaff'd  
With Tristram that spic'd magic draught,  
Which since then for ever rolls  
Through their blood, and binds their souls,

Working love, but working teen? —  
There were two Iseults, who did sway  
Each her hour of Tristram's day;  
But one possess'd his waning time,  
The other his resplendent prime.

Behold her here, the patient Flower,  
Who possess'd his darker hour.  
Iseult of the Snow-White Hand  
Watches pale by Tristram's bed.—  
She is here who had his gloom,  
Where art thou who hadst his bloom?  
One such kiss as those of yore  
Might thy dying knight restore —

Does the love-draught work no more?  
Art thou cold, or false, or dead,  
Iseult of Ireland?

Loud howls the wind, sharp patters the  
rain,  
And the knight sinks back on his pillows  
again.

He is weak with fever and pain,  
And his spirit is not clear.  
Hark! he mutters in his sleep,  
As he wanders far from here,  
Changes place and time of year,  
And his closed eye doth sweep  
O'er some fair unwintry sea,  
Not this fierce Atlantic deep,  
As he mutters brokenly —

## TRISTRAM

The calm sea shines, loose hang the ves-  
sel's sails —

Before us are the sweet green fields of  
Wales,  
And overhead the cloudless sky of May.—  
'Ah, would I were in those green fields at  
play.

*Not pent on ship-board this delicious day.*  
*Tristram, I pray thee, of thy courtesy,*  
*Reach me my golden cup that stands by*  
*thee,*

*And pledge me in it first for courtesy. —*  
*Ha! dost thou start? are thy lips blanch'd*  
*like mine?*

*Child, 'tis no water this, 'tis poison'd*  
*wine. —*

Iseult! . . .

Ah, sweet angels, let him dream!  
 Keep his eyelids! let him seem  
 Not this fever-wasted wight  
 Thinn'd and pal'd before his time,  
 But the brilliant youthful knight  
 In the glory of his prime,  
 Sitting in the gilded barge,  
 At thy side, thou lovely charge!  
 Bending gaily o'er thy hand,  
 Iseult of Ireland!  
 And she too, that princess fair,  
 If her bloom be now less rare,  
 Let her have her youth again—

Let her be as she was then!  
 Let her have her proud dark eyes,  
 And her petulant quick replies,  
 Let her sweep her dazzling hand  
 With its gesture of command,  
 And shake back her raven hair  
 With the old imperious air.

As of old, so let her be,  
 That first Iseult, princess bright,  
 Chatting with her youthful knight  
 As he steers her o'er the sea,  
 Quitting at her father's will  
 The green isle where she was bred,

And her bower in Ireland,  
 For the surge-beat Cornish strand,  
 Where the prince whom she must wed  
 Dwells on proud Tyntagel's hill,  
 Fast beside the sounding sea.  
 And that golden cup her mother  
 Gave her, that her future lord,  
 Gave her, that King Marc and she,  
 Might drink it on their marriage day,  
 And for ever love each other,

Let her, as she sits on board,  
 Ah, sweet saints, unwittingly,  
 See it shine, and take it up,  
 And to Tristram laughing say—  
 'Sir Tristram, of thy courtesy,  
 Pledge me in my golden cup!'  
 Let them drink it—let their hands  
 Tremble, and their cheeks be flame,  
 As they feel the fatal bands  
 Of a love they dare not name,  
 With a wild delicious pain,

Twine about their hearts again.  
 Let the early summer be  
 Once more round them, and the sea  
 Blue, and o'er its mirror kind  
 Let the breath of the May wind,  
 Wandering through their drooping sails,  
 Die on the green fields of Wales.  
 Let a dream like this restore  
 What his eye must see no more.

## TRISTRAM

Chill blows the wind, the pleasaunce walks  
 are drear.  
 Madcap, what jest was this, to meet me  
 here?

Were feet like those made for so wild a  
 way?  
 The southern winter-parlour, by my fay,  
 Had been the likeliest trysting-place to-day.  
 'Tristram! — nay, nay — thou must not  
 take my hand —  
 Tristram — sweet love — we are betray'd —  
 out-plann'd.  
 Fly — save thyself — save me. I dare not  
 stay.—  
 One last kiss first! — 'Tis vain — to horse—  
 — away!

Ah, sweet saints, his dream doth move  
 Faster surely than it should,  
 From the fever in his blood.  
 All the spring-time of his love  
 Is already gone and past,  
 And instead thereof is seen  
 Its winter, which endureth still —  
 Tyntagel on its surge-beat hill,  
 The pleasaunce walks, the weeping queen,  
 The flying leaves, the straining blast,  
 And that long, wild kiss — their last.  
 And this rough December night  
 And his burning fever pain  
 Mingle with his hurrying dream  
 Till they rule it, till he seem  
 The press'd fugitive again,  
 The love-desperate banish'd knight  
 With a fire in his brain  
 Flying o'er the stormy main.

Whither does he wander now?  
 Haply in his dreams the wind  
 Wafts him here, and lets him find  
 The lovely Orphan Child again  
 In her castle by the coast,  
 The youngest, fairest chatelaine,  
 That this realm of France can boast,

Our Snowdrop by the Atlantic sea,  
 Iseult of Brittany.  
 And — for through the haggard air,  
 The stain'd arms, the matted hair  
 Of that stranger knight ill-starr'd,  
 There gleam'd something that recall'd  
 The Tristram who in better days  
 Was Launcelot's guest at Joyous Gard —  
 Welcom'd here, and here install'd,  
 Tended of his fever here,  
 Haply he seems again to move  
 His young guardian's heart with love;

In his exil'd loneliness,  
 In his stately deep distress,  
 Without a word, without a tear.—

Ah, 'tis well he should retrace  
 His tranquil life in this lone place;  
 His gentle bearing at the side  
 Of his timid youthful bride;  
 His long rambles by the shore  
 On winter evenings, when the roar  
 Of the near waves came, sadly grand,  
 Through the dark, up the drown'd sand:

Or his endless reveries  
 In the woods, where the gleams play  
 On the grass under the trees,  
 Passing the long summer's day  
 Idle as a mossy stone  
 In the forest depths alone;  
 The chase neglected, and his hound  
 Couch'd beside him on the ground.—  
 Ah, what trouble's on his brow?  
 Hither let him wander now,  
 Hither, to the quiet hours  
 Pass'd among these heaths of ours  
 By the grey Atlantic sea.  
 Hours, if not of ecstasy,  
 From violent anguish surely free.

## TRISTRAM

All red with blood the whirling river flows,  
 The wide plain rings, the daz'd air throbs  
 with blows.  
 Upon us are the chivalry of Rome—  
 Their spears are down, their steeds are  
 bath'd in foam.  
 'Up, Tristram, up,' men cry, 'thou moon-  
 struck knight!  
 What foul fiend rides thee? On into the  
 fight!—  
 Above the din her voice is in my ears—  
 I see her form glide through the crossing  
 spears.—  
 Iseult! . . .

Ah, he wanders forth again;  
 We cannot keep him; now as then  
 There's a secret in his breast  
 That will never let him rest.  
 These musing fits in the green wood  
 They cloud the brain, they dull the blood.  
 His sword is sharp—his horse is good—  
 Beyond the mountains will he see  
 The famous towns of Italy,  
 And label with the blessed sign  
 The heathen Saxons on the Rhine.  
 At Arthur's side he fights once more  
 With the Roman Emperor.  
 There's many a gay knight where he goes  
 Will help him to forget his care.  
 The march—the leaguer—Heaven's blithe  
 air—  
 The neighing steeds—the ringing blows;  
 Sick pining comes not where these are.  
 Ah, what boots it, that the jest  
 Lightens every other brow,  
 What, that every other breast  
 Dances as the trumpets blow,  
 If one's own heart beats not light  
 On the waves of the toss'd fight,  
 If oneself cannot get free  
 From the clog of misery?  
 Thy lovely youthful Wife grows pale  
 Watching by the salt sea tide  
 With her children at her side

For the gleam of thy white sail.  
 Home, Tristram, to thy halls again!  
 To our lonely sea complain,  
 To our forests tell thy pain.

## TRISTRAM

All round the forest sweeps off, black in  
 shade,  
 But it is moonlight in the open glade:  
 And in the bottom of the glade shine  
 clear  
 The forest chapel and the fountain near.  
 I think, I have a fever in my blood:  
 Come, let me leave the shadow of this  
 wood,  
 Ride down, and bathe my hot brow in the  
 flood.  
 Mild shines the cold spring in the moon's  
 clear light.  
 God! 'tis her face plays in the water bright.—  
 'Fair love,' she says, 'canst thou forget so  
 soon,  
 At this soft hour, under this sweet moon?'  
 Iseult! . . .

Ah poor soul, if this be so,  
 Only death can balm thy woe.  
 The solitudes of the green wood  
 Had no medicine for thy mood.  
 The rushing battle clear'd thy blood  
 As little as did solitude.  
 Ah, his eyelids slowly break  
 Their hot seals, and let him wake.  
 What new change shall we now see?  
 A happier? Worse it cannot be.

## TRISTRAM

Is my Page here? Come, turn me to the  
 fire.  
 Upon the window panes the moon shines  
 bright;  
 The wind is down: but she'll not come to-  
 night.  
 Ah no—she is asleep in Cornwall now,  
 Far hence—her dreams are fair—smooth  
 is her brow.  
 Of me she recks not, nor my vain desire.  
 I have had dreams, I have had dreams,  
 my Page,  
 Would take a score years from a strong  
 man's age,  
 And with a blood like mine, will leave,  
 I fear,  
 Scant leisure for a second messenger.  
 My Princess, art thou there? Sweet, 'tis  
 too late.  
 To bed, and sleep: my fever is gone by:  
 To-night my Page shall keep me company.  
 Where do the children sleep? kiss them  
 for me.

Poor child, thou art almost as pale as I;  
This comes of nursing long and watching  
late.  
To bed—good night!

She left the gleam-lit fire-place,  
She came to the bed-side.  
She took his hands in hers: her tears  
Down on her slender fingers rain'd.  
She rais'd her eyes upon his face—  
Not with a look of wounded pride,  
A look as if the heart complain'd:—  
Her look was like a sad embrace;  
The gaze of one who can divine  
A grief, and sympathise.  
Sweet Flower, thy children's eyes  
Are not more innocent than thine.  
But they sleep in sheltered rest,  
Like helpless birds in the warm nest,  
On the Castle's southern side;  
Where feebly comes the mournful roar  
Of buffeting wind and surging tide  
Through many a room and corridor.  
Full on their window the Moon's ray  
Makes their chamber as bright as day;  
It shines upon the blank white walls,  
And on the snowy pillow falls,  
And on two angel-heads doth play  
Turn'd to each other:—the eyes clos'd—  
The lashes on the cheeks repos'd.  
Round each sweet brow the cap close-set  
Hardly lets peep the golden hair;  
Through the soft-open'd lips the air  
Scarcely moves the coverlet.  
One little wandering arm is thrown  
At random on the counterpane,  
And often the fingers close in haste  
As if their baby owner chas'd  
The butterflies again.  
This stir they have and this alone;  
But else they are so still.  
Ah, tired madcaps, you lie still.  
But were you at the window now  
To look forth on the fairy sight  
Of your illumin'd haunts by night;  
To see the park-glades where you play  
Far lovelier than they are by day:  
To see the sparkle on the eaves,  
And upon every giant bough  
Of those old oaks, whose wet red leaves  
Are jewell'd with bright drops of rain—  
How would your voices run again!  
And far beyond the sparkling trees  
Of the castle park one sees  
The bare heaths spreading, clear as day,  
Moor behind moor, far, far away,  
Into the heart of Brittany.  
And here and there, lock'd by the land,  
Long inlets of smooth glittering sea,  
And many a stretch of watery sand  
All shining in the white moon-beams.  
But you see fairer in your dreams.

What voices are these on the clear night  
air?  
What lights in the court? what steps on the  
stair?

## II

## ISEULT OF IRELAND

TRISTRAM

RAISE the light, my Page, that I may see  
her.—  
Thou art come at last then, haughty Queen!  
Long I've waited, long I've fought my  
fever:  
Late thou comest, cruel thou hast been.

ISEULT

Blame me not, poor sufferer, that I tarried:  
I was bound, I could not break the band.  
Chide not with the past, but feel the  
present:

I am here—we meet—I hold thy hand.

TRISTRAM

Thou art come, indeed—thou hast rejoin'd  
me;  
Thou hast dar'd it: but too late to save.  
Fear not now that men should tax thy  
honour.  
I am dying: build—(thou may'st)—my  
grave!

ISEULT

Tristram, for the love of Heaven, speak  
kindly!

What, I hear these bitter words from thee?  
Sick with grief I am, and faint with  
travel—

Take my hand—dear Tristram, look on  
me!

TRISTRAM

I forgot, thou comest from thy voyage.  
Yes, the spray is on thy cloak and hair.  
But thy dark eyes are not dimm'd, proud  
Iseult!

And thy beauty never was more fair.

ISEULT

Ah, harsh flatterer! let alone my beauty.  
I, like thee, have left my youth afar.  
Take my hand, and touch these wasted  
fingers—  
See my cheek and lips, how white they are.

TRISTRAM

Thou art paler:—but thy sweet charm,  
Iseult!  
Would not fade with the dull years away.  
Ah, how fair thou standest in the moon-  
light!  
I forgive thee, Iseult!—thou wilt stay?

ISEULT

Fear me not, I will be always with thee;  
I will watch thee, tend thee, soothe thy  
pain;  
Sing thee tales of true long-parted lovers  
Join'd at evening of their days again.

## TRISTRAM

No, thou shalt not speak; I should be finding  
Something alter'd in thy courtly tone.  
Sit — sit by me: I will think, we've lived so  
In the greenwood, all our lives, alone.

## ISEULT

Alter'd, Tristram? Not in courts, believe  
me,

Love like mine is alter'd in the breast.  
Courtly life is light and cannot reach it.  
Ah, it lives, because so deep suppress'd.

Royal state with Marc, my deep-wrong'd  
husband —

That was bliss to make my sorrow flee!  
Silken courtiers whispering honied nothings —

Those were friends to make me false to  
thee!

What, thou think'st, men speak in courtly  
chambers

Words by which the wretched are consol'd?

What, thou think'st, this aching brow was  
cooler,

Circled, Tristram, by a band of gold?

Ah, on which; if both our lots were bal-  
anc'd,

Was indeed the heaviest burden thrown,

Thee, a weeping exile in thy forest —

Me, a smiling queen upon my throne?

Vain and strange debate, where both have  
suffer'd;

Both have pass'd a youth constrain'd and  
sad;

Both have brought their anxious day to  
evening.

And have now short space for being glad.

Join'd we are henceforth: nor will thy  
people

Nor thy younger Iseult take it ill,  
That a former rival shares her office,  
When she sees her humbled, pale, and still.

I, a faded watcher by thy pillow,  
I, a statue on thy chapel floor,  
Pour'd in grief before the Virgin Mother,  
Rouse no anger, make no rivals more.

She will cry — 'Is this the foe I dreaded?  
This his idol? this that royal bride?

Ah, an hour of health would purge his  
eyesight:

Stay, pale queen! for ever by my side.'

Hush, no words! that smile, I see, forgives  
me.

I am now thy nurse, I bid thee sleep.  
Close thine eyes — this flooding moonlight  
blinds them —

Nay, all's well again: thou must not weep.

## TRISTRAM

I am happy: yet I feel, there's something  
Swells my heart, and takes my breath  
away:

Through a mist I see thee: near! — come  
nearer!

Bend — bend down — I yet have much to  
say.

## ISEULT

Heaven! his head sinks back upon the  
pillow! —

Tristram! Tristram! let thy heart not fail.  
Call on God and on the holy angels!

What, love, courage! — Christ! he is so  
pale.

## TRISTRAM

Hush, 'tis vain, I feel my end approaching.  
This is what my mother said should be,  
When the fierce pains took her in the  
forest,

The deep draughts of death, in bearing me.

'Son,' she said, 'thy name shall be of sor-  
row!'

Tristram art thou call'd for my death's  
sake!'

So she said, and died in the drear forest.  
Grief since then his home with me doth  
make.

I am dying. — Start not, nor look wildly!  
Me, thy living friend, thou canst not save.  
But, since living we were united,  
Go not far, O Iseult! from my grave.

Rise, go hence, and seek the princess Iseult:  
Speak her fair, she is of royal blood.  
Say, I charg'd her, that ye live together: —  
She will grant it — she is kind and good.

Now to sail the seas of Death I leave thee;  
One last kiss upon the living shore!

## ISEULT

Tristram! — Tristram! — stay — receive me  
with thee!

Iseult leaves thee, Tristram, never more.

You see them clear: the moon shines  
bright.

Slow — slow and softly, where she stood,  
She sinks upon the ground: her hood  
Had fallen back: her arms outspread  
Still hold her lover's hands: her head  
Is bow'd, half-buried, on the bed.  
O'er the blanch'd sheet her raven hair  
Lies in disorder'd streams; and there,  
Strung like white stars, the pearls still are,  
And the golden bracelets heavy and rare  
Flash on her white arms still.

The very same which yesternight  
Flash'd in the silver sconces' light,  
When the feast was gay and the laughter  
loud

In Tyntagel's palace proud.  
But then they deck'd a restless ghost  
With hot-flush'd cheeks and brilliant eyes,  
And quivering lips on which the tide  
Of courtly speech abruptly died,  
And a glance that over the crowded floor,  
The dancers, and the festive host,

Flew ever to the door.

That the knights eyed her in surprise,  
And the dames whisper'd scoffingly—  
'Her moods, good lack, they pass like  
showers!'

But yesternight and she would be  
As pale and still as wither'd flowers,  
And now to-night she laughs and speaks  
And has a colour in her cheeks.

Christ keep us from such fantasy! —

The air of the December night  
Steals coldly around the chamber bright,  
Where those lifeless lovers be.  
Swinging with it, in the light  
Shines the ghostlike tapestry.  
And on the arras wrought you see  
A stately Huntsman, clad in green,  
And round him a fresh forest scene.  
On that clear forest knoll he stays  
With his pack round him, and delays.  
He stares and stares, with troubled face,  
At this huge gleam-lit fireplace,  
At the bright iron-figur'd door,  
And those blown rushes on the floor.

He gazes down into the room  
With heated cheeks and flurried air,  
And to himself he seems to say—  
*'What place is this, and who are they?  
Who is that kneeling Lady fair?  
And on his pillows that pale Knight  
Who seems of marble on a tomb?  
How comes it here, this chamber bright,  
Through whose mullion'd windows clear  
The castle court all wet with rain,  
The drawbridge, and the moat appear,  
And then the beach, and mark'd with spray  
The sunken reefs, and far away  
The unquiet bright Atlantic plain? —*

*What, has some glamour made me sleep,  
And sent me with my dogs to sweep,  
By night, with boisterous bugle peal,  
Through some old, sea-side, knightly hall,  
Not in the free greenwood at all?  
That Knight's asleep, and at her prayer  
That Lady by the bed doth kneel:  
Then hush, thou boisterous bugle peal!* —

The wild boar rustles in his lair —  
The fierce hounds snuff the tainted air —  
But lord and hounds keep rooted there.

Cheer, cheer thy dogs into the brake,  
O Hunter! and without a fear  
Thy golden-tassell'd bugle blow,  
And through the glades thy pastime take!

For thou wilt rouse no sleepers here.  
For these thou seest are unmov'd;  
Cold, cold as those who liv'd and lov'd  
A thousand years ago.

### III ISEULT OF BRITTANY

A YEAR had flown, and o'er the sea away.  
In Cornwall, Tristram and Queen Iseult  
lay;

In King Marc's chapel, in Tyntagel old;  
There in a ship they bore those lovers cold.  
The young surviving Iseult, one bright day,  
Had wander'd forth: her children were at  
play

In a green circular hollow in the heath  
Which borders the sea-shore; a country  
path

Creeps over it from the till'd fields behind.  
The hollow's grassy banks are soft inclin'd,  
And to one standing on them, far and near  
The lone unbroken view spreads bright and  
clear

Over the waste: — This cirque of open  
ground

Is light and green; the heather, which all  
round

Creeps thickly, grows not here; but the  
pale grass

Is strewn with rocks, and many a shiver'd  
mass

Of vein'd white-gleaming quartz, and here  
and there

Dotted with holly trees and juniper.  
In the smooth centre of the opening stood  
Three hollies side by side, and made a  
screen

Warm with the winter sun, of burnish'd  
green,

With scarlet berries gemm'd, the fell-fare's  
food.

Under the glittering hollies Iseult stands  
Watching her children play: their little  
hands

Are busy gathering spars of quartz, and  
streams

Of stagshorn for their hats: anon, with  
screams

Of mad delight they drop their spoils, and  
bound

Among the holly clumps and broken  
ground,

Racing full speed, and startling in their  
rush

The fell-fares and the speckled missel-  
thrush

Out of their glossy coverts: but when now  
Their cheeks were flush'd, and over each  
hot brow

Under the feather'd hats of the sweet pair  
In blinding masses shower'd the golden  
hair —

Then Iseult called them to her, and the three  
Cluster'd under the holly screen, and she Told them an old-world Breton history.

Warm in their mantles wrapt, the three stood there,  
Under the hollies, in the clear still air — Mantles with those rich furs deep glistening Which Venice ships do from swart Egypt bring.  
Long they stayed still — then, pacing at their ease, Mov'd up and down under the glossy trees; But still as they pursued their warm dry road From Iseult's lips the unbroken story flow'd, And still the children listen'd, their blue eyes Fix'd on their mother's face in wide surprise;  
Nor did their looks stray once to the sea-side, Nor to the brown heaths round them, bright and wide, Nor to the snow which, though 'twas all away From the open heath, still by the hedge-rows lay, Nor to the shining sea-fowl that with screams Bore up from where the bright Atlantic gleams, Swooping to landward; nor to where, quite clear, The fell-fares settled on the thickets near. And they would still have listen'd, till dark night Came keen and chill down on the heather bright; But, when the red glow on the sea grew cold, And the grey turrets of the castle old Look'd sternly through the frosty evening air, — Then Iseult took by the hand those children fair, And brought her tale to an end, and found the path And led them home over the darkening heath.

And is she happy? Does she see unmov'd The days in which she might have liv'd and lov'd Slip without bringing bliss slowly away, One after one, to-morrow like to-day? Joy has not found her yet, nor ever will: Is it this thought that makes her mien so still, Her features so fatigued, her eyes, though sweet, So sunk, so rarely lifted save to meet

Her children's? She moves slow: her voice alone Has yet an infantine and silver tone, But even that comes languidly: in truth, She seems one dying in a mask of youth. And now she will go home, and softly lay Her laughing children in their beds, and play Awhile with them before they sleep; and then She'll light her silver lamp, which fishermen Dragging their nets through the rough waves, afar, Along this iron coast, know like a star, And take her broidery frame, and there she'll sit Hour after hour, her gold curls sweeping it, Lifting her soft-bent head only to mind Her children, or to listen to the wind. And when the clock peals midnight, she will move Her work away, and let her fingers rove Across the shaggy brows of Tristram's hound Who lies, guarding her feet, along the ground: Or else she will fall musing, her blue eyes Fix'd, her slight hands clasp'd on her lap; then rise, And at her prie-dieu kneel, until she have told Her rosary beads of ebony tipp'd with gold, Then to her soft sleep: and to-morrow'll be To-day's exact repeated effigy.

Yes, it is lonely for her in her hall. The children, and the grey-hair'd seneschal, Her women, and Sir Tristram's aged hound, Are there the sole companions to be found. But these she loves; and noisier life than this She would find ill to bear, weak as she is: She has her children too, and night and day Is with them; and the wide heaths where they play, The hollies, and the cliff, and the sea-shore, The sand, the sea birds, and the distant sails, These are to her dear as to them: the tales With which this day the children she beguil'd She glean'd from Breton grandames when a child In every hut along this sea-coast wild. She herself loves them still, and, when they are told, Can forget all to hear them, as of old.

Dear saints, it is not sorrow, as I hear, Not suffering, that shuts up eye and ear

To all which has delighted them before,  
And lets us be what we were once no  
more.

No: we may suffer deeply, yet retain  
Power to be mov'd and sooth'd, for all our  
pain,

By what of old pleas'd us, and will again.  
No: 'tis the gradual furnace of the world,  
In whose hot air our spirits are upcurl'd  
Until they crumble, or else grow like  
steel—

Which kills in us the bloom, the youth,  
the spring—

Which leaves the fierce necessity to feel,  
But takes away the power—this can avail,  
By drying up our joy in everything,  
To make our former pleasures all seem  
stale.

This, or some tyrannous single thought,  
some fit

Of passion, which subdues our souls to it,  
Till for its sake alone we live and move—  
Call it ambition, or remorse, or love—  
This too can change us wholly, and make  
seem

All that we did before, shadow and dream.

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see  
How this fool passion gulls men potently;  
Being in truth but a diseas'd unrest  
And an unnatural overheat at best.  
How they are full of languor and distress  
Not having it; which when they do pos-  
sess

They straightway are burnt up with fume  
and care,

And spend their lives in posting here and  
there

Where this plague drives them; and have  
little ease,

Are fretful with themselves, and hard to  
please,

Like that bold Caesar, the fam'd Roman  
wight,

Who wept at reading of a Grecian knight  
Who made a name at younger years than  
he:

Or that renown'd mirror of chivalry,  
Prince Alexander, Philip's peerless son,  
Who carried the great war from Macedon  
Into the Soudan's realm, and thunder'd on  
To die at thirty-five in Babylon.

What tale did Iseult to the children  
say,

Under the hollies, that bright winter's day?

She told them of the fairy-haunted land  
Away the other side of Brittany,  
Beyond the heaths, edg'd by the lonely sea;  
Of the deep forest-glades of Broce-liande,  
Through whose green boughs the golden  
sunshine creeps,

Where Merlin by the enchanted thorn-tree  
sleeps.

For here he came with the fay Vivian,  
One April, when the warm days first be-  
gan;

He was on foot, and that false fay, his  
friend,

On her white palfrey: here he met his  
end,  
In these lone sylvan glades, that April  
day.

This tale of Merlin and the lovely fay  
Was the one Iseult chose, and she brought  
clear

Before the children's fancy him and her.

Blowing between the stems the forest air  
Had loosen'd the brown curls of Vivian's  
hair,

Which play'd on her flush'd cheek, and  
her blue eyes

Sparkled with mocking glee and exercise.  
Her palfrey's flanks were mired and bath'd  
in sweat,

For they had travell'd far and not stopp'd  
yet.

A brier in that tangled wilderness  
Had scor'd her white right hand, which she  
allows

To rest unglov'd on her green riding-  
dress;

The other warded off the drooping boughs.  
But still she chatted on, with her blue  
eyes

Fix'd full on Merlin's face, her stately  
prize:

Her 'aviour had the morning's fresh clear  
grace,

The spirit of the woods was in her face;  
She look'd so witching fair, that learn'd  
wight

Forgot his craft, and his best wits took  
flight,

And he grew fond, and eager to obey  
His mistress, use her empire as she may.

They came to where the brushwood  
ceas'd, and day

Peer'd 'twixt the stems; and the ground  
broke away

In a slop'd sward down to a brawling  
brook,

And up as high as where they stood to  
look

On the brook's further side was clear;  
but then

The underwood and trees began again.  
This open glen was studded thick with  
thorns

Then white with blossom; and you saw the  
horns,

Through the green fern, of the shy fallow-  
deer

Which come at noon down to the water  
here

You saw the bright-eyed squirrels dart  
along  
Under the thorns on the green sward;  
and strong  
The blackbird whistled from the dingles  
near,  
And the light chipping of the woodpecker  
Rang lonely and sharp: the sky was fair,  
And a fresh breath of spring stirr'd every-  
where.  
Merlin and Vivian stopp'd on the slope's  
brow  
To gaze on the green sea of leaf and  
bough  
Which glistening lay all round them, lone  
and mild,  
As if to itself the quiet forest smil'd.  
Upon the brow-top grew a thorn; and  
here  
The grass was dry and moss'd, and you  
saw clear  
Across the hollow: white anemones  
Starr'd the cool turf, and clumps of prim-  
roses  
Ran out from the dark underwood behind.  
No fairer resting-place a man could find.  
'Here let us halt,' said Merlin then; and  
she  
Nodded, and tied her palfrey to a tree.

They sate them down together, and a  
sleep  
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep.  
Her finger on her lips, then Vivian rose,  
And from her brown-lock'd head the wim-  
ple throws,  
And takes it in her hand, and waves it  
over  
The blossom'd thorn-tree and her sleeping  
lover.  
Nine times she wav'd the fluttering wimple  
round,  
And made a little plot of magic ground.  
And in that daisied circle, as men say,  
Is Merlin prisoner till the judgment-day,  
But she herself whither she will can rove,  
For she was passing weary of his love.

## MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

[1852.]

GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,  
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.  
But one such death remain'd to come.  
The last poetic voice is dumb.  
What shall be said o'er Wordsworth's  
tomb?

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,  
We bow'd our head and held our breath.  
He taught us little: but our soul  
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.

With shivering heart the strife we saw  
Of Passion with Eternal Law.  
And yet with reverential awe  
We watch'd the fount of fiery life  
Which serv'd for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said—  
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.  
Physician of the Iron Age  
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.  
He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear—  
And struck his finger on the place  
And said—Thou ailest here, and here.—  
He look'd on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power;  
His eye plung'd down the weltering strife;  
The turmoil of expiring life;  
He said—The end is everywhere:  
Art still has truth, take refuge there.—  
And he was happy, if to know  
Causes of things, and far below  
His feet to see the lurid flow  
Of terror, and insane distress,  
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts! rejoice!

For never has such soothing voice  
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,  
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade  
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come  
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.  
Wordsworth is gone from us—and ye,  
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.  
He too upon a wintry clime  
Had fallen—on this iron time  
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.  
He found us when the age had bound  
Our souls in its benumbing round:  
He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.  
He laid us as we lay at birth  
On the cool flowery lap of earth;  
Smiles broke from us and we had ease.  
The hills were round us, and the breeze  
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again:  
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.  
Our youth return'd: for there was shed  
On spirits that had long been dead,  
Spirits dried up and closely-furl'd,  
The freshness of the early world.

Ah, since dark days still bring to light  
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,  
Time may restore us in his course  
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force:  
But where will Europe's latter hour  
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?  
Others will teach us how to dare,  
And against fear our breast to steel;  
Others will strengthen us to bear—  
But who, ah who, will make us feel?  
The cloud of mortal destiny,  
Others will front it fearlessly—

But who, like him, will put it by?  
 Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,  
 O Rotha! with thy living wave.  
 Sing him thy best! for few or none  
 Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

## SELF-DEPENDENCE

[1852.]

WEARY of myself, and sick of asking  
 What I am, and what I ought to be,  
 At the vessel's prow I stand, which bears  
     me  
 Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire  
 O'er the sea and to the stars I send:  
 'Ye who from my childhood up have  
     calm'd me,  
 Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'Ye Stars, ye  
     Waters,  
 On my heart your mighty charm renew:  
 Still, still, let me, as I gaze upon you,  
 Feel my soul becoming vast like you.'

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of  
     heaven,  
 Over the lit sea's unquiet way,  
 In the rustling night-air came the answer —  
 'Wouldst thou be as these are? Live as  
     they.

Unaffrighted by the silence round them,  
 Undistracted by the sights they see,  
 These demand not that the things without  
     them  
 Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

'And with joy the stars perform their  
     shining,  
 And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll.  
 For alone they live, nor pine with noting  
 All the fever of some differing soul.

Bounded by themselves, and unobservant  
 In what state God's other works may be,  
 In their own tasks all their powers pouring,  
 These attain the mighty life you see.'

O air-born Voice! long since, severely  
     clear,  
 A cry like thine in my own heart I hear.  
 'Resolve to be thyself: and know, that he  
 Who finds himself, loses his misery.'

## A SUMMER NIGHT

[1852.]

In the deserted moon-blanch'd street  
 How lonely rings the echo of my feet!  
 Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,  
 Silent and white, unopening down,

Repellent as the world: — but see!  
 A break between the housetops shows  
 The moon, and lost behind her, fading  
     dim

Into the dewy dark obscurity  
 Down at the far horizon's rim,  
 Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose.

And to my mind the thought  
 Is on a sudden brought  
 Of a past night, and a far different scene.  
 Headlands stood out into the moonlit  
     deep

As clearly as at noon;  
 The spring-tide's brimming flow  
 Heav'd dazzlingly between;  
 Houses with long white sweep  
 Girdled the glistening bay:  
 Behind, through the soft air,  
 The blue haze-crusted mountains spread  
     away.

That night was far more fair;  
 But the same restless pacings to and fro  
 And the same vainly throbbing heart was  
     there,  
 And the same bright calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say —  
*Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast  
 That neither deadens into rest  
 Nor ever feels the fiery glow  
 That whirls the spirit from itself away,  
 But fluctuates to and fro  
 Never by passion quite possess'd,  
 And never quite benumb'd by the world's  
 sway?*

And I, I know not if to pray  
 Still to be what I am, or yield, and be  
 Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,  
 Where in the sun's hot eye,  
 With heads bent o'er their toil, they lan-  
     guidly

Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork  
     give.  
 Dreaming of nought beyond their prison  
     wall.

And as, year after year,  
 Fresh products of their barren labour fall  
 From their tired hands, and rest  
 Never yet comes more near,  
 Gloom settles slowly down over their  
     breast.

And while they try to stem  
 The waves of mournful thought by which  
     they are prest,  
 Death in their prison reaches them  
 Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,  
 Escape their prison, and depart  
 On the wide Ocean of Life anew.  
 There the freed prisoner, where'er his  
     heart

*saves up a philosophy.*

Listeth, will sail;  
Nor does he know how there prevail,  
Despotic on life's sea,  
Trade-winds that cross it from eternity.  
Awhile he holds some false sway, un-debarr'd  
By thwarting signs, and braves  
The freshening wind and blackening waves.  
And then the tempest strikes him, and  
between  
The lightning bursts is seen  
Only a driving wreck,  
And the pale Master on his spar-strewn  
deck  
With anguish'd face and flying hair  
Grasping the rudder hard,  
Still bent to make some port he knows not  
where,  
Still standing for some false impossible  
shore.  
And sterner comes the roar  
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening  
gloom  
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman  
loom,  
And he too disappears, and comes no more.  
  
Is there no life, but these alone?  
Madman or slave, must man be one?  
  
Plainness and clearness without shadow  
of stain,  
Clearness divine!  
Ye Heavens, whose pure dark regions have  
no sign  
Of languor, though so calm, and though so  
great  
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate:  
Who, though so noble, share in the world's  
toil,  
And though so task'd, keep free from dust  
and soil:  
I will not say that your mild deeps retain  
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain  
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd  
in vain;  
But I will rather say that you remain  
A world above man's head, to let him see  
How boundless might his soul's horizons  
be,  
How vast, yet of what clear transparency.  
How it were good to sink there, and  
breathe free.  
How high a lot to fill  
Is left to each man still.

### THE BURIED LIFE

[1852.]

LIGHT flows our war of mocking words,  
and yet,  
Behold, with tears my eyes are wet.  
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.  
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,

We know, we know that we can smile;  
But there's a something in this breast  
To which thy light words bring no rest,  
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.  
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,  
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,  
And let me read there, love, thy inmost  
soul.

Alas, is even Love too weak  
To unlock the heart and let it speak?  
Are even lovers powerless to reveal  
To one another what indeed they feel?  
I knew the mass of men conceal'd  
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd  
They would by other men be met  
With blank indifference, or with blame re-  
prov'd:  
I knew they liv'd and mov'd  
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest  
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet  
The same heart beats in every human  
breast.

But we, my love—does a like spell benumb  
Our hearts—our voices?—must we too  
be dumb?

Ah, well for us, if even we,  
Even for a moment, can get free  
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd;  
For that which seals them hath been deep  
ordain'd.

Fate, which foresaw  
How frivolous a baby man would be,  
By what distractions he would be possess'd,  
How he would pour himself in every strife,  
And well-nigh change his own identity;  
That it might keep from his capricious play  
His genuine self, and force him to obey  
Even in his own despite, his being's law,  
Bade, through the deep recesses of our  
breast

The unregarded river of our life  
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;  
And that we should not see  
The buried stream, and seem to be  
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,  
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often in the world's most crowded  
streets,  
But often, in the din of strife,  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life,  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course;  
A longing to enquire  
Into the mystery of this heart that beats  
So wild, so deep in us, to know  
Whence our thoughts come and where they  
go.  
And many a man in his own breast then  
delves,

But deep enough, alas, none ever mines:  
And we have been on many thousand lines,  
And we have shown on each talent and  
power,  
But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
Been on our own line, have we been our-  
selves;  
Hardly had skill to utter one of all  
The nameless feelings that course through  
our breast,  
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.  
And long we try in vain to speak and act  
Our hidden self, and what we say and do  
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true:  
And then we will no more be rack'd  
With inward striving, and demand  
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour  
Their stupefying power;  
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call:  
Yet still, from time to time, vague and  
forlorn,  
From the soul's subterranean depth up-  
borne  
As from an infinitely distant land,  
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey  
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—  
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
When, jaded with the rush and glare  
Of the interminable hours,  
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
When our world-deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd,  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our  
breast  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again:  
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies  
plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we  
would, we know.

A man becomes aware of his life's flow  
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the  
breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth for ever chase  
That flying and elusive shadow, Rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.  
And then he thinks he knows  
The Hills where his life rose,  
And the Sea where it goes.

#### STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF 'OBERMANN'

[1852.]

In front the awful Alpine track  
Crawls up its rocky stair;  
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack  
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandoned baths  
Mute in their meadows lone;  
The leaves are on the valley paths;  
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea.  
I hear the torrents roar.

—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee!  
I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves: I feel their breath  
Once more upon me roll;  
That air of languor, cold, and death,  
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor Wretch, whoe'er thou art,  
Condemn'd to cast about,  
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,  
For comfort from without:

A fever in these pages burns  
Beneath the calm they feign;  
A wounded human spirit turns  
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air  
Fresh through these pages blows,  
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare  
The soul of their white snows,

Though here a mountain murmur swells  
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,  
Though, as you read, you hear the bells  
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,  
And brooding mountain bee,  
There sobs I know not what ground tone  
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound  
Is fraught too deep with pain,  
That, Obermann! the world around  
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,  
For the world loves new ways.  
To tell too deep ones is not well;  
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd  
In this our troubled day,  
I know but two, who have attain'd,  
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,  
His quiet home one keeps;  
And one, the strong much-toiling Sage,  
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken  
From half of human fate;  
And Goethe's course few sons of men  
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,  
His eye on nature's plan;  
Neither made man too much a God,  
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free  
From mists, and sane, and clear;  
Clearer, how much! than ours: yet we  
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast  
Of a tremendous time,  
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd  
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours  
Of change, alarm, surprise—  
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?  
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,  
Buried a wave beneath.  
The second wave succeeds, before  
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,  
Too harass'd, to attain  
Wordsworth sweet calm, or Goethe's wide  
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder sage!  
To thee: we feel thy spell.  
The hopeless tangle of our age—  
Thou too hast scann'd it well.

Immovable thou sittest; still  
As death; compos'd to bear.  
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—  
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,  
One hears thee saying now—  
'Greater by far than thou are dead:  
Strive not: die also thou.'

Ah! Two desires toss about  
The poet's feverish blood.  
One drives him to the world without,  
And one to solitude.

'The glow,' he cries, 'the thrill of life—  
Where, where do these abound?'  
Not in the world, not in the strife  
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shar'd, the  
strife,  
Knows how the day hath gone;  
He only lives with the world's life  
Who hath renounc'd his own.

To thee we come, then. Clouds are roll'd  
Where thou, O Seer, art set;  
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—  
The world is colder yet!

And thou hast pleasures too to share  
With those who come to thee;  
Balms floating on thy mountain air,  
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green  
On Jaman, hast thou sate  
By some high chalet door, and seen  
The summer day grow late,

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass  
With the pale crocus starr'd,  
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass  
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Leman's waters, far below:  
And watch'd the rosy light  
Fade from the distant peaks of snow:  
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue  
Through the pine branches play:  
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young;  
Listen'd, and wept—Away!

Away the dreams that but deceive!  
And thou, sad Guide, adieu!  
I go; Fate drives me: but I leave  
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,  
Move on a rigorous line:  
Can neither, when we will, enjoy;  
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live:—but thou,  
Thou melancholy Shade!  
Wilt not, if thou can't see me now,  
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,  
And place with those dost claim,  
The Children of the Second Birth  
Whom the world could not tame;

And with that small transfigur'd Band,  
Whom many a different way  
Conducted to their common land,  
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,  
Soldier and anchorite,  
Distinctions we esteem so grave,  
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pin'd unseen,  
Who was on action hurl'd,  
Whose one bond is that all have been  
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see  
Him who obeys thy spell  
No more, so he but rest, like thee,  
Unsoil'd:—and so, Farewell!

Farewell! — Whether thou now liest near  
That much-lov'd inland sea,  
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer  
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,  
Where with clear-rustling wave  
The scented pines of Switzerland  
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls  
Issuing on that green place  
The early peasant still recalls  
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date  
Ere he plods on again; —  
Or whether, by maligner Fate,  
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces  
The blue Seine rolls her wave,  
The Capital of Pleasure sees  
Thy hardly-heard-of grave —

Farewell! Under the sky we part,  
In this stern Alpine dell.  
O unstrung will! O broken heart!  
A last, a last farewell!

### THE YOUTH OF NATURE

[1852.]

Rais'd are the dripping oars —  
Silent the boat; the lake,  
Lovely and soft as a dream,  
Swims in the sheen of the moon.  
The mountains stand at its head  
Clear in the pure June night,  
But the valleys are flooded with haze.  
Rydal and Fairfield are there;  
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.  
So it is, so it will be for ay.  
Nature is fresh as of old,  
Is lovely: a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,  
For he lent a new life to these hills.  
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields  
That border Ennerdale Lake,  
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.  
The gleam of The Evening Star  
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,  
But ruin'd and solemn and grey  
The sheepfold of Michael survives,  
And far to the south, the heath  
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,  
By the favourite waters of Ruth.  
These survive: yet not without pain,  
Pain and dejection to-night,  
Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

He grew old in an age he condemn'd.  
He look'd on the rushing decay  
Of the times which had shelter'd his youth.  
Felt the dissolving throes  
Of a social order he lov'd.

Outliv'd his brethren, his peers.  
And, like the Theban seer,  
Died in his enemies' day.

Cold bubbled the spring of Tilphusa.  
Copais lay bright in the moon;  
Helicon glass'd in the lake  
Its firs, and afar, rose the peaks  
Of Parnassus, snowily clear:  
Thebes was behind him in flames,  
And the clang of arms in his ear,  
When his awe-struck captors led  
The Theban seer to the spring.

Tiresias drank and died.  
Nor did reviving Thebes  
See such a prophet again.

Well may we mourn, when the head  
Of a sacred poet lies low  
In an age which can rear them no more.  
The complaining millions of men  
Darken in labour and pain;  
But he was a priest to us all  
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,  
Which we saw with his eyes, and were  
glad.

He is dead, and the fruit-bearing day  
Of his race is past on the earth;  
And darkness returns to our eyes.

For oh, is it you, is it you,  
Moonlight, and shadow, and lake,  
And mountains, that fill us with joy,  
Or the Poet who sings you so well?  
Is it you, O Beauty, O Grace,  
O Charm, O Romance, that we feel,  
Or the voice which reveals what you are?  
Are ye, like daylight and sun,  
Shar'd and rejoic'd in by all?  
Or are ye immers'd in the mass  
Of matter, and hard to extract,  
Or sunk at the core of the world  
Too deep for the most to discern?  
Like stars in the deep of the sky,  
Which arise on the glass of the sage,  
But are lost when their watcher is gone.

'They are here' — I heard, as men heard  
In Mysian Ida the voice  
Of the Mighty Mother, or Crete,  
The murmur of Nature reply —  
'Loveliness, Magic, and Grace,  
They are here — they are set in the world —  
They abide — and the finest of souls  
Has not been thrill'd by them all,  
Nor the dullest been dead to them quite.  
The poet who sings them may die,  
But they are immortal, and live,  
For they are the life of the world.  
Will ye not learn it, and know,  
When ye mourn that a poet is dead,  
That the singer was less than his themes,  
Life, and Emotion, and I?

'More than the singer are these.  
Weak is the tremor of pain

That thrills in his mournfullest chord  
To that which once ran through his soul.  
Cold the elation of joy  
In his gladdest, airiest song,  
To that which of old in his youth  
Fill'd him and made him divine.  
Hardly his voice at its best  
Gives us a sense of the awe,  
The vastness, the grandeur, the gloom  
Of the unlit gulf of himself.

'Ye know not yourselves — and your bards,  
The clearest, the best, who have read  
Most in themselves, have beheld  
Less than they left unreveal'd.  
Ye express not yourselves — can ye make  
With marble, which colour, with word,  
What charm'd you in others re-live?  
Can thy pencil, O Artist, restore  
The figure, the bloom of thy love,  
As she was in her morning of spring?  
Canst thou paint the ineffable smile  
Of her eyes as they rested on thine?  
Can the image of life have the glow,  
The motion of life itself?

'Yourselves and your fellows ye know not  
— and me  
The mateless, the one, will ye know?  
Will ye scan me, and read me, and tell  
Of the thoughts that ferment in my breast,  
My longing, my sadness, my joy?  
Will ye claim for your great ones the gift  
To have render'd the gleam of my skies,  
To have echoed the moan of my seas,  
Utter'd the voice of my hills?  
When your great ones depart, will ye say —  
"All things have suffer'd a loss —  
Nature is hid in their grave?"

'Race after race, man after man,  
Have dream'd that my secret was theirs,  
Have thought that I liv'd but for them,  
That they were my glory and joy.—  
They are dust, they are chang'd, they are  
gone.  
I remain.'

### MORALITY

[1852.]

We cannot kindle when we will  
The fire that in the heart resides,  
The spirit bloweth and is still,  
In mystery our soul abides:  
But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet  
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;  
We bear the burden and the heat  
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.  
Not till the hours of light return  
All we have built do we discern,

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,  
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,  
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,  
Thy struggling task'd morality.

Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,  
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,  
Whose eyes thou wert afraid to seek,  
See, on her face a glow is spread,  
A strong emotion on her cheek.

'Ah child,' she cries, 'that strife divine—  
Whence was it, for it is not mine?'

'There is no effort on *my* brow —  
I do not strive, I do not weep.  
I rush with the swift spheres, and glow  
In joy, and, when I will, I sleep.—  
Yet that severe, that earnest air,  
I saw, I felt it once — but where?

'I knew not yet the gauge of Time,  
Nor wore the manacles of Space.  
I felt it in some other clime —  
I saw it in some other place.  
— 'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,  
And lay upon the breast of God.'

### THE FUTURE

[1852.]

A WANDERER is man from his birth.  
He was born in a ship  
On the breast of the River of Time.  
Brimming with wonder and joy  
He spreads out his arms to the light,  
Rivets his gaze on the banks of the stream.

As what he sees is, so have his thoughts  
been.

Whether he wakes  
Where the snowy mountainous pass  
Echoing the screams of the eagles  
Hems in its gorges the bed  
Of the new-born clear-flowing stream:

Whether he first sees light  
Where the river in gleaming rings  
Sluggishly winds through the plain:  
Whether in sound of the swallowing sea :—  
As is the world on the banks  
So is the mind of the man.

Vainly does each as he glides  
Fable and dream  
Of the lands which the River of Time  
Had left ere he woke on its breast,  
Or shall reach when his eyes have been  
clos'd.

Only the tract where he sails  
He wots of: only the thoughts,  
Rais'd by the objects he passes, are his.

Who can see the green Earth any more  
As she was by the sources of Time?

Who imagines her fields as they lay  
In the sunshine, unworn by the plough?  
Who thinks as they thought,  
The tribes who then roam'd on her breast,  
Her vigorous primitive sons?

What girl  
Now reads in her bosom as clear  
As Rebekah read, when she sate  
At eve by the palm-shaded well?  
Who guards in her breast  
As deep, as pellucid a spring  
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

What Bard,  
At the height of his vision, can deem  
Of God, of the world, of the soul,  
With a plainness as near,  
As flashing as Moses felt,  
When he lay in the night by his flock  
On the starlit Arabian waste?  
Can rise and obey  
The beck of the Spirit like him?

This tract which the River of Time  
Now flows through with us, is the Plain.  
Gone is the calm of its earlier shore.  
Border'd by cities and hoarse  
With a thousand cries is its stream.  
And we on its breast, our minds  
Are confus'd as the cries which we hear,  
Changing and shot as the sights which we  
see.

And we say that repose has fled  
For ever the course of the River of Time.  
That cities will crowd to its edge  
In a blacker incessanter line;  
That the din will be more on its banks,  
Denser the trade on its stream,  
Flatter the plain where it flows,  
Fiercer the sun overhead.  
That never will those on its breast  
See an ennobling sight,  
Drink of the feeling of quiet again.

But what was before us we know not,  
And we know not what shall succeed.

Haply, the River of Time,  
As it grows, as the towns on its marge  
Fling their wavering lights  
On a wider statelier stream—  
May acquire, if not the calm  
Of its early mountainous shore,  
Yet a solemn peace of its own.

And the width of the waters, the hush  
Of the grey expanse where he floats,  
Freshening its current and spotted with  
foam  
As it draws to the Ocean, may strike  
Peace to the soul of the man on its breast:  
As the pale waste widens around him—

As the banks fade dimmer away—  
As the stars come out, and the night-wind  
Brings up the stream  
Murmurs and scents of the infinite Sea.

### SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

AN EPISODE

[1853.]

'The young Sohrab was the fruit of one of Rustum's early amours. He had left his mother, and sought fame under the banners of Afrasiab, whose armies he commanded, and soon obtained a renown beyond that of all contemporary heroes but his father. He had carried death and dismay into the ranks of the Persians, and had terrified the boldest warriors of that country, before Rustum encountered him, which at last that hero resolved to do, under a feigned name. They met three times. The first time they parted by mutual consent, though Sohrab had the advantage; the second, the youth obtained a victory, but granted life to his unknown father; the third was fatal to Sohrab, who, when writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance that is inspired by parental woes, and bade him dread the rage of the mighty Rustum, who must soon learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words, we are told, were as death to the aged hero; and when he recovered from a trance, he called in despair for proofs of what Sohrab had said. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his mail, and showed his father a seal which his mother had placed on his arm when she discovered to him the secret of his birth, and bade him seek his father. The sight of his own signet rendered Rustum quite frantic; he cursed himself, attempting to put an end to his existence, and was only prevented by the efforts of his expiring son. After Sohrab's death, he burnt his tents and all his goods, and carried the corpse to Seistan, where it was interred; the army of Turan was, agreeably to the last request of Sohrab, permitted to cross the Oxus unmolested. . . . To reconcile us to the improbability of this tale, we are informed that Rustum could have no idea his son was in existence. The mother of Sohrab had written to him her child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant if she revealed the truth; and Rustum, as before stated, fought under a feigned name, an usage not uncommon in the chivalrous combats of those days.'

—SIR JOHN MALCOLM'S *History of Persia*

*deliberately attempt to let us know it is*  
*the first grey of morning fill'd the*  
*east,*

And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.  
But all the Tartar camp along the stream  
Was hush'd, and still the men were plung'd  
in sleep:

Sohrab alone, he slept not: all night long  
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;  
But when the grey dawn stole into his tent,  
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his  
sword,

And took his horseman's cloak, and left  
the tent,

And went abroad into the cold wet fog,  
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's  
tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd,  
which stood

*English singer of*  
*original songs &c.*

Clustering like bee-hives on the low flat strand  
 Of Oxus, where the summer floods o'erflow  
 When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere:  
 Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,  
 And to a hillock came, a little back From the stream's brink, the spot where first a boat,  
 Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.  
 The men of former times had crown'd the top  
 With a clay fort: but that was fall'n; and now  
 The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent, A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.  
 And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood Upon the thick-pil'd carpets in the tent, And found the old man sleeping on his bed  
 Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms.  
 And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step  
 Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep:  
 And he rose quickly on one arm, and said: 'Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.  
 Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?' But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—  
 'Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa: it is I. The sun is not yet risen, and the foe Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee. For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son, In Samarcand, before the army march'd; And I will tell thee what my heart desires. Thou knowest if, since from Ader-baijan first  
 I came among the Tartars, and bore arms, I have still serv'd Afrasiab well, and shown, At my boy's years, the courage of a man. This too thou know'st, that, while I still bear on  
 The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,  
 And beat the Persians back on every field, I seek one man, one man, and one alone—Rustum, my father; who, I hop'd, should greet,  
 Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field  
 His not unworthy, not inglorious son. So I long hop'd, but him I never find. Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.

Let the two armies rest to-day: but I Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords  
 To meet me, man to man: if I prevail, Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.  
 Dim is the rumour of a common fight, Where host meets host, and many names are sunk:  
 But of a single combat Fame speaks clear.' He spoke: and Peran-Wisa took the hand Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—  
 'O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine! Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,  
 And share the battle's common chance with us Who love thee, but must press for ever first,  
 In single fight incurring single risk, To find a father thou hast never seen? That were far best, my son, to stay with us Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war, And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.  
 But, if this one desire indeed rules all, To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight:  
 Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms, O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son! But far hence seek him, for he is not here. For now it is not as when I was young, When Rustum was in front of every fray: But now he keeps apart, and sits at home, In Seistan, with Zal, his father old. Whether that his own mighty strength at last Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age; Or in some quarrel with the Persian King. There go:—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes Danger or death awaits thee on this field. Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost To us: fain therefore send thee hence, in peace To seek thy father, not seek single fights In vain:—but who can keep the lion's cub From ravenging? and who govern Rustum's son?  
 Go: I will grant thee what thy heart desires.' So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay, And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet, And threw a white cloak round him, and he took In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;

And on his head he placed his sheep-skin cap,  
 Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul;  
 And rais'd the curtain of his tent, and call'd His herald to his side, and went abroad.  
 The sun, by this, had risen, and clear'd the fog  
 From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands:  
 And from their tents the Tartar horsemen fil'd  
 Into the open plain; so Haman bade;  
 Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa rul'd  
 The host, and still was in his lusty prime.  
 From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd:  
 As when, some grey November morn, the files,  
 In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes  
 Stream over Casbin, and the southern slopes  
 Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,  
 Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, southward bound  
 For the warm Persian sea-board: so they stream'd.  
 The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard, First with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;  
 Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come  
 And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.  
 Next the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,  
 The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,  
 And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;  
 Light men, and on light steeds, who only drink  
 The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.  
 And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came  
 From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;  
 The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards  
 And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes  
 Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste  
 Kalmuks and unkemp'd Kuzzaks, tribes who stray  
 Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizes,  
 Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere.  
 These all fil'd out from camp into the plain.  
 And on the other side the Persians form'd:  
 First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,  
 The Ilyats of Khorassan: and behind,  
 The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,

Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.  
 But Peran-Wisa with his herald came Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,  
 And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.  
 And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,  
 He took his spear, and to the front he came,  
 And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.  
 And the old Tartar came upon the sand Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:—  
 'Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!  
 Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.  
 But choose a champion from the Persian lords  
 To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man.'  
 As, in the country, on a morn in June, When the dew glistens on the pearly ears, A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—  
 So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,  
 A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran  
 Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they lov'd.  
 But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool, Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
 That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;  
 Winding so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
 Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
 Chok'd by the air, and scarce can they themselves slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—  
 In single file they move, and stop their breath,  
 For fear they should dislodge the o'er-hanging snows—  
 So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.  
 And to Ferood his brother Chiefs came up  
 To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came, And Feraburz, who rul'd the Persian host Second, and was the uncle of the King: These came and counsell'd; and then Gudurz said:  
 'Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,  
 Yet champion have we none to match this youth.'

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.

But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits  
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart:  
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear  
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.

Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.  
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up.'

So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and said:—

'Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said.  
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man.'

He spoke; and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode

Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.

But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,

And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,

Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.

Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,

Just pitch'd: the high pavilion in the midst  
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.

And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found

Rustum: his morning meal was done, but still

The table stood beside him, charg'd with food;

A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,

And dark green melons; and there Rustum sat

Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,  
And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood

Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand;

And with a cry sprang up, and drop'd the bird,

And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—

'Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.

What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink.'

But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—

'Not now: a time will come to eat and drink,'

But not to-day: to-day has other needs.  
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze:

For from the Tartars is a challenge brought

To pick a champion from the Persian lords

To fight their champion — and thou know'st his name —

Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.  
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!

He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart.

And he is young, and Iran's Chiefs are old,

Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.

Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose.'

He spoke: but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—

'Go to! if Iran's Chiefs are old, then I Am older: if the young are weak, the King Errs strangely: for the King, for Kai Khosroo,

Himself is young, and honours younger men,

And lets the aged moulder to their graves.  
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young —

The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.

For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?

For would that I myself had such a son,  
And not that one slight helpless girl I have,  
A son so fam'd, so brave, to send to war,  
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,  
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,  
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,

And he has none to guard his weak old age.  
There would I go, and hang my armour up,

And with my great name fence that weak old man,

And spend the goodly treasures I have got,

And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,

And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,

And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more.'

He spoke, and smil'd; and Gudurz made reply:—

'What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,

When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks

Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,

Hidest thy face? Take heed, lest men should say,

*Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,*

*And shuns to peril it with younger men.*

And, greatly mov'd, then Rustum made reply:—

'O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?  
 Thou knowest better words than this to say.  
 What is one more, one less, obscure or fam'd,  
 Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?  
 Are not they mortal, am not I myself?  
 But who for men of nought would do great deeds?  
 Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame.  
 But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;  
 Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd  
 In single fight with any mortal man.' He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran  
 Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy,  
 Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.  
 But Rustum strode to his tent door, and call'd  
 His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,  
 And clad himself in steel: the arms he chose  
 Were plain, and on his shield was no device,  
 Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,  
 And from the fluted spine atop, a plume  
 Of horsehair wav'd, a scarlet horsehair plume.  
 So arm'd he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,  
 Follow'd him, like a faithful hound, at heel,  
 Ruksh, whose renown was nois'd through all the earth,  
 The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once  
 Did in Bokhara by the river find  
 A colt beneath its dam, and droye him home,  
 And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest;  
 Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green  
 Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd  
 All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.  
 So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd  
 The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.  
 And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts  
 Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.  
 And dear as the wet diver to the eyes  
 Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,

By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,  
 Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,  
 Having made up his tale of precious pearls,  
 Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—  
 So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.  
 And Rustum to the Persian front advanc'd,  
 And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.  
 And as afiel'd the reapers cut a swathe  
 Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,  
 And on each side are squares of standing corn,  
 And in the midst a stubble, short and bare;  
 So on each side were squares of men, with spears  
 Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.  
 And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.  
 As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,  
 Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge  
 Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—  
 At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,  
 When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes—  
 And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts  
 Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed  
 The unknown adventurous Youth, who from afar  
 Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth  
 All the most valiant chiefs: long he perus'd  
 His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.  
 For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;  
 Like some young cypress, tall and dark, and straight,  
 Which in a queen's secluded garden throws  
 Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,  
 By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—  
 So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.  
 And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul  
 As he beheld him coming; and he stood,  
 And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—  
 'O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,  
 And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold.  
 Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.  
 Behold me: I am vast, and clad in iron,

And tried; and I have stood on many a field  
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe:  
Never was that field lost, or that foe sav'd.  
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?  
Be govern'd: quit the Tartar host, and come  
To Iran, and be as my son to me,  
And fight beneath my banner till I die.  
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou.'  
So he spake, mildly: Sohrab heard his voice,  
The mighty voice of Rustum; and he saw His giant figure planted on the sand,  
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief Has builded on the waste in former years Against the robbers; and he saw that head,  
Streak'd with his first grey hairs: hope fill'd his soul;  
And he ran forwards and embrac'd his knees,  
And clasp'd his hand within his own and said:—  
'Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!  
Art thou not Rustum? Speak! art thou not he?'  
But Rustum ey'd askance the kneeling youth,  
And turn'd away, and spoke to his own soul:—  
'Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean.  
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.  
For if I now confess this thing he asks,  
And hide it not, but say—*Rustum is here*—  
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,  
But he will find some pretext not to fight.  
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,  
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.  
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,  
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry—  
"I challeng'd once, when the two armies camp'd  
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords  
To cope with me in single fight; but they Shrank; only Rustum dar'd: then he and I Chang'd gifts, and went on equal terms away."  
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud.  
Then were the chiefs of Iran sham'd through me.'  
And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—  
'Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus  
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd'

By challenge forth: make good thy vaunt, or yield.  
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldest fight?  
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee.  
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand  
Before thy face this day, and were reveal'd,  
There would be then no talk of fighting more.  
But being what I am, I tell thee this;  
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:  
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt, and yield;  
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds  
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer floods,  
Oxus in summer wash them all away.'  
He spoke: and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—  
'Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so.  
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.  
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand  
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.  
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.  
Begin: thou art more vast, more dread than I,  
And thou art prov'd, I know, and I am young—  
But yet Success sways with the breath of Heaven.  
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure  
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.  
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,  
Pois'd on the top of a huge wave of Fate,  
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.  
And whether it will heave us up to land,  
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,  
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,  
We know not, and no search will make us know:  
Only the event will teach us in its hour.'  
He spoke; and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd  
His spear: down from the shoulder, down it came,  
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk That long has tower'd in the airy clouds  
Drops like a plummet: Sohrab saw it come,  
And sprang aside, quick as a flash: the spear  
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,

Which it sent flying wide:—then Sohrab  
threw  
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield:  
sharp rang,  
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the  
spear.  
And Rustum seiz'd his club, which none  
but he  
Could wield: an unlopp'd trunk it was, and  
huge,  
Still rough; like those which men in treeless  
plains  
To build them boats fish from the flooded  
rivers,  
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up  
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-  
time  
Has made in Himalayan forests wrack,  
And strewn the channels with torn boughs;  
so huge  
The club which Rustum lifted now, and  
struck  
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside  
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club  
came  
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rus-  
tum's hand.  
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and  
fell  
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd  
the sand:  
And now might Sohrab have unsheathe'd  
his sword,  
And pierc'd the mighty Rustum while he  
lay  
Dizzy, and on his knees, and chok'd with  
sand:  
But he look'd on, and smil'd, nor bar'd his  
sword,  
But courteously drew back, and spoke,  
and said:—  
 'Thou strik'st too hard: that club of  
thine will float  
Upon the summer floods, and not my  
bones.  
But rise, and be not wroth; not wroth  
am I:  
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my  
soul.  
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum: be it so.  
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my  
soul?  
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too;  
Have waded foremost in their bloody  
waves,  
And heard their hollow roar of dying men;  
But never was my heart thus touch'd be-  
fore.  
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of  
the heart?  
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!  
Come, plant we here in earth our angry  
spears,

And make a truce, and sit upon this sand,  
And pledge each other in red wine, like  
friends,  
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's  
deeds.  
There are enough foes in the Persian host  
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no  
pang;  
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom  
thou  
Mayst fight; fight them, when they con-  
front thy spear.  
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and  
me!'  
He ceas'd: but while he spake, Rustum  
had risen,  
And stood erect, trembling with rage: his  
club  
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,  
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-  
hand  
Blaz'd bright and baleful, like that autumn  
Star,  
The baleful sign of fevers: dust had soil'd  
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering  
arms.  
His breast heav'd; his lips foam'd; and  
twice his voice  
Was chok'd with rage: at last these words  
broke way:—  
 'Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with  
thy hands!  
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet  
words!  
Fight; let me hear thy hateful voice no  
more!  
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now  
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art  
wont to dance;  
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance  
Of battle, and with me, who make no  
play  
Of war: I fight it out, and hand to hand.  
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and  
wine!  
Remember all thy valour: try thy feints  
And cunning: all the pity I had is gone:  
Because thou hast sham'd me before both  
the hosts  
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy  
girl's wiles.'  
He spoke; and Sohrab kindled at his  
taunts,  
And he too drew his sword: at once they  
rush'd  
Together, as two eagles on one prey  
Come rushing down together from the  
clouds,  
One from the east, one from the west:  
their shields  
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din  
Rose, such as that the sinewy wood-  
cutters

Make often in the forest's heart at morn,  
Of hewing axes, crashing trees: such blows  
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.  
And you would say that sun and stars took  
part  
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud  
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the  
sun  
Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose  
Under their feet, and moaning swept the  
plain,  
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.  
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and  
they alone;  
For both the on-looking hosts on either  
hand  
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was  
pure,  
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.  
But in the gloom they fought, with blood-  
shot eyes  
And labouring breath; first Rustum struck  
the shield  
Which Sohrab held stiff out: the steel-  
spik'd spear  
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach  
the skin,  
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry  
groan.  
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rus-  
tum's helm,  
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all  
the crest  
He shore away, and that proud horsehair  
plume,  
Never till now defil'd, sunk to the dust;  
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the  
gloom  
Grew blacker: thunder rumbled in the air,  
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh,  
the horse,  
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry:  
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar  
Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day  
Has trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,  
And comes at night to die upon the sand:—  
The two hosts heard that cry, and quak'd  
for fear,  
And Oxus curld as it cross'd his stream.  
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but  
rush'd on,  
And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd  
His head; but this time all the blade, like  
glass,  
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,  
And in his hand the hilt remain'd alone.  
Then Rustum rais'd his head: his dreadful  
eyes  
Glar'd, and he shook on high his menacing  
spear,  
And shouted, *Rustum!* Sohrab heard that  
shout,

And shrank amaz'd: back he recoil'd one  
step,  
And scann'd with blinking eyes the advanc-  
ing Form:  
And then he stood bewilder'd; and he  
dropp'd  
His covering shield, and the spear pierc'd  
his side.  
He reel'd, and staggering back, sunk to the  
ground.  
And then the gloom dispers'd, and the  
wind fell,  
And the bright sun broke forth, and  
melted all  
The cloud; and the two armies saw the  
pair;  
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,  
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.  
Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum be-  
gan:—  
'Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to  
kill  
A Persian lord this day, and strip his  
corpse,  
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.  
Or else that the great Rustum would come  
down  
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would  
move  
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.  
And then that all the Tartar host would  
praise  
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy  
fame,  
To glad thy father in his weak old age.  
Fool! thou art slain, and by an unknown  
man!  
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be,  
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old.'  
And with a fearless mien Sohrab re-  
plied:—  
'Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is  
vain.  
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful  
man!  
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.  
For were I match'd with ten such men as  
thou,  
And I were he who till to-day I was,  
They should be lying here, I standing there.  
But that beloved name unnerv'd my arm—  
That name, and something, I confess, in  
thee,  
Which troubles all my heart, and made my  
shield  
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd  
foe.  
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my  
fate.  
But hear thou this, fierce Man, tremble to  
hear!  
The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!

My father, whom I seek through all the world,  
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!

As when some hunter in the spring hath found  
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
And pierc'd her with an arrow as she rose,  
And follow'd her to find her where she fell  
Far off; — anon her mate comes winging back  
From hunting, and a great way off descries  
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks  
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps  
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she  
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,  
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,  
A heap of fluttering feathers: never more  
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;  
Never the black and dripping precipices  
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by: —  
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows  
his loss —

So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood  
Over his dying son, and knew him not.  
But with a cold, incredulous voice, he said: —

'What prate is this of fathers and revenge?  
The mighty Rustum never had a son.'

And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied: —

'Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.  
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,  
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,  
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here;  
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap  
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.  
Fierce Man, bethink thee, for an only son!  
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be!  
Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!  
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,  
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells  
With that old King, her father, who grows grey  
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.  
Her most I pity, who no more will see  
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,  
With spoils and honour, when the war is done.  
But a dark rumour will be bruited up,  
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;  
And then will that defenceless woman learn

That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more;  
But that in battle with a nameless foe,  
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain.'  
He spoke; and as he ceas'd he wept aloud,  
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.  
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plung'd in thought.  
Nor did he yet believe it was his son  
Who spoke, although he call'd back names  
he knew;  
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,  
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,  
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all:  
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear  
Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms;  
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,  
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;  
Or that men gave it him, to swell his fame.  
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plung'd in thought;  
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide  
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore  
At the full moon: tears gathered in his eyes;  
For he remembered his own early youth,  
And all its bounding rapture: as, at dawn,  
The Shepherd from his mountain lodge descries  
A far bright City, smitten by the sun,  
Through many rolling clouds; — so Rustum saw  
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;  
And that old King, her father, who lov'd well  
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child  
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,  
They three, in that long-distant summer-time —  
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt  
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills  
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,  
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,  
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,  
Like some rich hyacinth, which by the scythe  
Of an unskillful gardener has been cut,  
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,  
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,  
On the mown, dying grass; — so Sohrab lay,  
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.  
And Rustum gaz'd on him with grief, and said: —  
'O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son  
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have lov'd!

Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men  
Have told thee false; — thou art not Rustum's son.  
For Rustum had no son: one child he had—  
But one—a girl: who with her mother now  
Plies some light female task, nor dreams  
of us—  
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor  
war.'  
But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for  
now  
The anguish of the deep-fix'd spear grew  
fierce,  
And he desired to draw forth the steel,  
And let the blood flow free, and so to die;  
But first he would convince his stubborn  
foe—  
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—  
'Man, who art thou who dost deny my  
words?  
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
And Falsehood, while I liv'd, was far from  
mine.  
I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear  
That seal which Rustum to my mother  
gave,  
That she might prick it on the babe she  
bore.'  
He spoke: and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks;  
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his  
hand,  
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,  
That the hard iron corset clank'd aloud:  
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,  
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—  
'Sohrab, that were a proof which could  
not lie.  
If thou shew this, then art thou Rustum's  
son.'  
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab  
loos'd  
His belt, and near the shoulder bar'd his  
arm,  
And shew'd a sign in faint vermilion points  
Prick'd: as a cunning workman, in Pekin,  
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain  
vase,  
An emperor's gift—at early morn he  
paints,  
And all day long, and, when night comes,  
the lamp  
Lights up his studious forehead and thin  
hands:—  
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd  
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's  
seal.  
It was that Griffin, which of old rear'd  
Zal,  
Rustum's great father, whom they left to  
die,  
A helpless babe, among the mountain rocks.

Him that kind Creature found, and rear'd,  
and lov'd—  
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.  
And Sohrab bar'd that figure on his arm,  
And himself scann'd it long with mournful  
eyes,  
And then he touch'd it with his hand and  
said:—  
'How say'st thou? Is that sign the  
proper sign  
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?'  
He spoke: but Rustum gaz'd, and gaz'd,  
and stood  
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp  
cry—  
*O Boy—thy Father!*—and his voice choked  
there.  
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his  
eyes,  
And his head swam, and he sunk down  
to earth.  
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and  
cast  
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,  
And with fond faltering fingers strok'd his  
cheeks,  
Trying to call him back to life: and life  
Came back to Rustum, and he op'd his  
eyes  
And they stood wide with horror; and he  
seiz'd  
In both his hands the dust which lay  
around,  
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd  
his hair,  
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering  
arms:  
And strong convulsive groanings shook his  
breast,  
And his sobs chok'd him; and he clutch'd  
his sword,  
To draw it, and for ever let life out.  
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his  
hands,  
And with a soothing voice he spoke, and  
said:—  
'Father, forbear: for I but meet to-day  
The doom that at my birth was written  
down  
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's uncon-  
scious hand.  
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke  
too,  
I know it: but Fate trod those promptings  
down  
Under its iron heel; Fate, Fate engag'd  
The strife and hurl'd me on my father's  
spear.  
But let us speak no more of this: I find  
My father; let me feel that I have found.  
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take

My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,  
And wash them with thy tears, and say,  
"My Son!"  
Quick! quick!, for number'd are my sands  
of life,  
And swift; for like the lightning to this field  
I came, and like the wind I go away—  
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.  
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be.'  
So said he: and his voice releas'd the heart  
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast  
His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,  
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts  
When they saw Rustum's grief: and Ruksh,  
the horse,  
With his head bowing to the ground, and mane  
Sweeping the dust, came near, and mute woe  
First to the one then to the other mov'd  
His head, as if enquiring what their grief  
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,  
The big warm tears roll'd down, and cak'd the sand.  
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—  
'Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh,  
thy feet  
Should then have rotted on their nimble joints,  
When first they bore thy Master to this field.'  
But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said:—  
'Is this then Ruksh? How often, in past days,  
My mother told me of thee, thou brave Steed!  
My terrible father's terrible horse; and said,  
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.  
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane.  
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;  
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,  
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home.  
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,  
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake  
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself  
Has often strok'd thy neck, and given thee food,  
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,  
And said—"O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!"  
—but I

Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,  
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,  
Nor slak'd my thirst at the clear Helmund stream:  
But lodg'd among my father's foes, and seen  
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,  
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,  
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk  
The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,  
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,  
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream—  
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die.'  
And, with a heavy groan, Rustum replied:—  
'Oh that its waves were flowing over me!  
'Oh that I saw its grains of yellow silt  
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!'  
And, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—  
'Desire not that, my father; thou must live.  
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,  
As some are born to be obscur'd, and die.  
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,  
And reap a second glory in thine age.  
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.  
But come: thou seest this great host of men  
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these;  
Let me entreat for them: what have they done?  
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.  
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.  
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,  
But carry me with thee to Seistan,  
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,  
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.  
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above my bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:  
That so the passing horseman on the waste  
May see my tomb a great way off, and say—  
*Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,*  
*Whom his great father did in ignorance kill—*  
And I be not forgotten in my grave.'  
And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—  
'Fear not; as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,  
So shall it be: for I will burn my tents.

And quit the host, and bear thee hence  
with me,  
And carry thee away to Seistan,  
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for  
thee,  
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my  
friends.

And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,  
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,  
And plant a far-seen pillar over all:  
And men shall not forget thee in thy  
grave.

And I will spare thy host: yea, let them go:  
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace,  
What should I do with slaying any more?  
For would that all whom I have ever slain  
Might be once more alive; my bitterest  
foes,

And they who were call'd champions in  
their time,  
And through whose death I won that fame  
I have;

And I were nothing but a common man,  
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown;  
So thou mightest live too, my Son, my  
Son!

Or rather would that I, even I myself,  
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,  
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of  
thine,

Not thou of mine; and I might die, not  
thou;

And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;  
And Zal might weep above my grave, not  
thine;

And say—*O son, I weep thee not too sore,*  
*For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine*  
*end.*—

But now in blood and battles was my youth,  
And full of blood and battles is my age;  
And I shall never end this life of blood.

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab re-  
plied:—

'A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful Man!  
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not  
now;

Not yet: but thou shalt have it on that  
day,  
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted  
Ship,

Thou and the other peers of Kai-Khosroo,  
Returning home over the salt blue sea,  
From laying thy dear Master in his grave.'

And Rustum gaz'd on Sohrab's face,  
and said:—

'Soon be that day, my Son, and deep that  
sea!'

Till then, if Fate so wills, let me endure.'  
He spoke; and Sohrab smil'd on him,  
and took

The spear, and drew it from his side, and  
eas'd

His wound's imperious anguish: but the  
blood

Came welling from the open gash, and life  
Flow'd with the stream: all down his cold  
white side

The crimson torrent ran, dim now, and  
soil'd,

Like the soil'd tissue of white violets  
Left, freshly gather'd, on their native bank,  
By romping children, whom their nurses  
call

From the hot fields at noon: his head  
droop'd low,

His limbs grew slack; motionless, white,  
he lay—

White, with eyes clos'd; only when heavy  
gasps,

Deep, heavy gasps, quivering through all  
his frame,

Convuls'd him back to life, he open'd  
them,

And fix'd them feebly on his father's face:  
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from  
his limbs

Unwillingly the spirit fled away,  
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,  
And youth and bloom, and this delightful  
world.

So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead.  
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's  
cloak

Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead  
son.

As those black granite pillars, once high-  
rear'd

By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear  
His house, now, mid their broken flights  
of steps,

Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain  
side—

So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.  
And night came down over the solemn  
waste,

And the two gazing hosts, and that sole  
pair,

And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with  
night,

Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,  
As of a great assembly loo'd, and fires  
Began to twinkle through the fog: for now  
Both armies mov'd to camp, and took their  
meal:

The Persians took it on the open sands  
Southward; the Tartars by the river  
marge:

And Rustum and his son were left alone.  
But the majestic River floated on,

Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there mov'd,  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian  
waste,

Under the solitary moon: he flow'd  
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjè,

Brimming, and bright, and large: then  
sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his  
streams,  
And split his currents; that for many a  
league  
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains  
along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy  
isles—  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain cradle in Pamere,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer:—till at last  
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard,  
and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-  
bath'd stars  
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

## PHIOMELA

[1853.]

HARK! ah, the Nightingale!  
The tawny-throated!  
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a  
burst!  
What triumph! hark—what pain!  
  
O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-  
world pain—  
Say, will it never heal?  
And can this fragrant lawn  
With its cool trees, and night,  
And the sweet tranquil Thames,  
And moonshine, and the dew,  
To thy rack'd heart and brain  
Afford no balm?  
Dost thou to-night behold  
Here, through the moonlight on this Eng-  
lish grass,  
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian  
wild?  
Dost thou again peruse  
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes  
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's  
shame?  
Dost thou once more assay  
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,  
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change  
Once more, and once more seem to make  
resound  
With love and hate, triumph and agony,  
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale:  
Listen, Eugenia—  
How thick the bursts come crowding  
through the leaves!  
Again—thou hearest!  
Eternal Passion!  
Eternal Pain!

## REQUIESCAT

[1853.]

STREW on her roses, roses,  
And never a spray of yew.  
In quiet she reposes:  
Ah! would that I did too.

Her mirth the world required:  
She bath'd it in smiles of glee.  
But her heart was tired, tired,  
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,  
In mazes of heat and sound.  
But for peace her soul was yearning,  
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,  
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.  
To-night it doth inherit  
The vasty Hall of Death.

## THE SCHOLAR GIPSY

[1853.]

'There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gypsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtlety of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while well exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gypsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.' — *GLANVIL'S Vanity of Dogmatizing*, 1661.

Go, FOR they call you, Shepherd, from the  
hill;  
Go, Shepherd, and untie the wattled  
cotes:  
No longer leave thy wistful flock un-  
fed,  
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their  
throats,  
Nor the cropp'd grasses shoot another  
head.  
But when the fields are still,  
And the tired men and dogs all gone to  
rest,  
And only the white sheep are sometimes  
seen  
Cross and recross the strips of moon-  
blanch'd green,  
Come, Shepherd, and again renew the  
quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,  
In this high field's dark corner, where  
he leaves  
His coat, his basket, and his earthen  
cruse,  
And in the sun all morning binds the  
sheaves,  
Then here, at noon, comes back his  
stores to use;  
Here will I sit and wait,  
While to my ear from uplands far away  
The bleating of the folded flocks is  
borne,  
With distant cries of reapers in the  
corn —  
All the live murmur of a summer's day.  
Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-  
reap'd field,  
And here till sun-down, Shepherd, will  
I be.  
Through the thick corn the scarlet  
poppies peep  
And round green roots' and yellowing  
stalks I see  
Pale blue convolvulus in tendrils creep:  
And air-swept lindens yield  
Their scent, and rustle down their per-  
fum'd showers  
Of bloom on the bent grass where I  
am laid,  
And bower me from the August sun  
with shade;  
And the eye travels down to Oxford's  
towers:  
And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's  
book —  
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again,  
The story of that Oxford scholar poor  
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive  
brain,  
Who, tir'd of knocking at Preferment's  
door,  
One summer morn forsook  
His friends, and went to learn the Gipsy  
lore,  
And roam'd the world with that wild  
brotherhood,  
And came, as most men deem'd, to  
little good,  
But came to Oxford and his friends no  
more.  
But once, years after, in the country lanes.  
Two scholars whom at college erst he  
knew  
Met him, and of his way of life en-  
quir'd.  
Whereat he answer'd, that the Gipsy  
crew,  
His mates, had arts to rule as they  
desir'd.  
The workings of men's brains;

And they can bind them to what thoughts  
they will:  
'And I,' he said, 'the secret of their art,  
When fully learn'd, will to the world  
impart:  
But it needs heaven-sent moments for  
this skill.'

This said, he left them, and return'd no  
more,  
But rumours hung about the country  
side  
That the lost Scholar long was seen  
to stray,  
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and  
tongue-tied,  
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of  
grey,  
The same the Gipsies wore.  
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in  
spring:  
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire  
moors,  
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-  
frock'd boors  
Had found him seated at their entering,  
But, mid their drink and clatter, he would  
fly:  
And I myself seem half to know thy  
looks,  
And put the shepherds, Wanderer, on  
thy trace;  
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare  
the rooks  
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet  
place;  
Or in my boat I lie  
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer  
heats,  
Mid wide grass meadows which the  
sunshine fills,  
And watch the warm green-muffled  
Cumner hills,  
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy  
retreats.  
For most, I know, thou lov'st retired  
ground.  
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,  
Returning home on summer nights,  
have met  
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-  
lock-hithe,  
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers  
wet,  
As the slow punt swings round:  
And leaning backwards in a pensive  
dream,  
And fostering in thy lap a heap of  
flowers  
Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wych-  
wood bowers,  
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit  
stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen  
no more.  
Maidens who from the distant hamlets  
come  
To dance around the Fyfield elm in  
May,  
Oft through the darkening fields have  
seen thee roam,  
Or cross a stile into the public way.  
Oft thou hast given them store  
Of flowers — the frail-leaf'd, white anem-  
one —  
Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of  
summer eves —  
And purple orchises with spotted  
leaves —  
But none has words she can report of  
thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-  
time's here  
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine  
flames,  
Men who through those wide fields of  
breezy grass  
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the  
glittering Thames,  
To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,  
Have often pass'd thee near  
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown:  
Mark'd thy outlandish garb, thy figure  
spare,  
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft ab-  
stracted air;  
But, when they came from bathing, thou  
wert gone.

At some lone homestead in the Cumner  
hills,  
Where at her open door the housewife  
darns,  
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a  
gate  
To watch the threshers in the mossy  
barns.  
Children, who early range these slopes  
and late  
For cresses from the rills,  
Have known thee watching, all an April  
day,  
The springing pastures and the feeding  
kine;  
And mark'd thee, when the stars come  
out and shine,  
Through the long dewy grass move slow  
away.

In Autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood,  
Where most the Gipsies by the turf-edg'd  
way  
Pitch their smok'd tents, and every  
bush you see

With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds  
of grey,  
Above the forest ground call'd Thes-  
saly —  
The blackbird picking food  
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears  
at all;  
So often has he known thee past him  
stray  
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd  
spray,  
And waiting for the spark from Heaven  
to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill  
Where home through flooded fields foot-  
travellers go,  
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden  
bridge  
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with  
the snow,  
Thy face towards Hinksey and its  
wintry ridge?  
And thou hast climb'd the hill  
And gain'd the white brow of the Cum-  
ner range,  
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the  
snowflakes fall,  
The line of festal light in Christ-  
Church hall —  
Then sought thy straw in some se-  
quester'd grange.

But what — I dream! Two hundred years  
are flown  
Since first thy story ran through Oxford  
halls,  
And the grave Glanvil did the tale  
inscribe  
That thou wert wander'd from the studi-  
ous walls  
To learn strange arts, and join a Gipsy  
tribe:

And thou from earth art gone  
Long since, and in some quiet church-  
yard laid;  
Some country nook, where o'er thy  
unknown grave  
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles  
wave —  
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's  
shade.

— No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of  
hours.  
For what wears out the life of mortal  
men?  
'Tis that from change to change their  
being rolls:  
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,  
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,  
And numb the elastic powers.

Till having us'd our nerves with bliss and  
teen,  
And tir'd upon a thousand schemes our  
wit,  
To the just-pausing Genius we remit  
Our worn-out life, and are — what we  
have been.

Thou hast not liv'd, why should'st thou  
perish, so?  
Thou hadst one aim, one business, one  
desire:  
Else wert thou long since number'd  
with the dead —  
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy  
fire.  
The generations of thy peers are fled,  
And we ourselves shall go;  
But thou possessest an immortal lot,  
And we imagine thee exempt from age  
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's  
page,  
Because thou hadst — what we, alas, have  
not!

For early didst thou leave the world, with  
powers  
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,  
Firm to their mark, not spent on other  
things;  
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid  
doubt,  
Which much to have tried, in much  
been baffled, brings.  
O Life unlike to ours!  
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,  
Of whom each strives, nor knows for  
what he strives,  
And each half lives a hundred different  
lives;  
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee,  
in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from Heaven:  
and we,  
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,  
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly  
will'd,  
Whose insight never has borne fruit in  
deeds,  
Whose vague resolves never have been  
fulfill'd;  
For whom each year we see  
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments  
new;  
Who hesitate and falter life away,  
And lose to-morrow the ground won  
to-day —  
Ah, do not we, Wanderer, await it too?

Yes, we await it, but it still delays,  
And then we suffer; and amongst us  
One,  
Who most has suffer'd, takes dejectedly

His seat upon the intellectual throne;  
And all his store of sad experience he  
Lays bare of wretched days;  
Tells us his misery's birth and growth  
and signs,  
And how the dying spark of hope was  
fed,  
And how the breast was sooth'd, and  
how the head,  
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pine,  
And wish the long unhappy dream would  
end,  
And waive all claim to bliss, and try  
to bear  
With close-lipp'd Patience for our only  
friend,  
Sad Patience, too near neighbour to  
Despair:  
But none has hope like thine.  
Thou through the fields and through the  
woods dost stray,  
Roaming the country side, a truant  
boy,  
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,  
And every doubt long blown by time  
away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and  
clear,  
And life ran gaily as the sparkling  
Thames;  
Before this strange disease of modern  
life,  
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,  
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts,  
was rife —  
Fly hence, our contact fear!  
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering  
wood!  
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern  
From her false friend's approach in  
Hades turn,  
Wave us away, and keep thy solitude.

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,  
Still clutching the inviolable shade,  
With a free onward impulse brushing  
through,  
By night, the silver'd branches of the  
glade —  
Far on the forest skirts, where none  
pursue  
On some mild pastoral slope  
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales,  
Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,  
With dew, or listen with enchanted  
ears,  
From the dark dingles, to the nightin-  
gales.

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!  
For strong the infection of our mental  
strife,

Which, though it gives no bliss, yet  
spoils for rest;  
And we should win thee from thy own  
fair life,  
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.  
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,  
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd  
thy powers,  
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made:  
And then thy glad perennial youth  
would fade,  
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like  
ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and  
smiles!

— As some grave Tyrian trader, from the  
sea.

Described at sunrise an emerging prow  
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,  
The fringes of a southward-facing  
brow

Among the Aegean isles:  
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,  
Freighted with amber grapes, and  
Chian wine,  
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd  
in brine;  
And knew the intruders on his ancient  
home,

The young light-hearted Masters of the  
waves;

And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out  
more sail,

And day and night held on indignantly  
O'er the blue Midland waters with the  
gale,

Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,  
To where the Atlantic raves  
Outside the Western Straits, and unbent  
sails

There, where down cloudy cliffs,  
through sheets of foam,  
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;  
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

#### STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

[1855.]

THROUGH Alpine meadows, soft-suffused  
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,  
Past the dark forges long disused,  
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.  
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,  
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,  
The wind is up, and drives the rain;  
While hark, far down, with strangled sound  
Doth the Dead Guiers stream complain,  
Where that wet smoke among the woods  
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white  
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,  
Showing — then blotting from our sight.  
Halt! through the cloud-drift something  
shines!

High in the valley, wet and drear,  
The huts of Courserie appear.

*Strike leftward!* cries our guide; and  
higher

Mounts up the stony forest-way.  
At last encircling trees retire;  
Look! through the showery twilight grey  
What pointed roofs are these advance?  
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here.  
Alight and sparely sup and wait  
For rest in this outbuilding near;  
Then cross the sward and reach that gate;  
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come  
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day  
Into their stone-carved basins cold  
The splashing icy fountains play,  
The humid corridors behold,  
Where ghostlike in the deepening night  
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white:

The chapel, where no organ's peal  
Invests the stern and naked prayer.  
With penitential cries they kneel  
And wrestle; rising then, with bare  
And white uplifted faces stand,  
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Each takes; and then his visage wan  
Is buried in his cowl once more.  
The cells — the suffering Son of Man  
Upon the wall! the knee-worn floor!  
And, where they sleep, that wooden bed,  
Which shall their coffin be, when dead.

The library, where tract and tome  
Not to feed priestly pride are there,  
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,  
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are;  
They paint of souls the inner strife,  
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown — yet mild  
Those fragrant herbs are flowering there!  
Strong children of the Alpine wild  
Whose culture is the brethren's care;  
Of human tasks their only one,  
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls too, destined to contain  
Each its own pilgrim host of old,  
From England, Germany, or Spain —  
All are before me! I behold  
The House, the Brotherhood austere!  
And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,  
Show'd me the high white star of Truth,  
There bade me gaze, and there aspire;  
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:  
*What dost thou in this living tomb?*

Forgive me, masters of the mind!  
At whose behest I long ago  
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd!  
I come not here to be your foe.  
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,  
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend or child I speak!  
But as on some far northern strand,  
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
In pity and mournful awe might stand  
Before some fallen Runic stone —  
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride;  
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound.  
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!  
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me  
round,  
Till I possess my soul again!  
Till free my thoughts before me roll,  
Not chafed by hourly false control.

For the world cries your faith is now  
But a dead time's exploded dream;  
My melancholy, sciolists say,  
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme —  
As if the world had ever had  
A faith, or sciolists been sad.

Ah, if it be pass'd, take away,  
At least, the restlessness — the pain!  
Be man henceforth no more a prey  
To these out-dated stings again!  
The nobleness of grief is gone —  
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But, if you cannot give us ease,  
Last of the race of them who grieve  
Here leave us to die out with these  
Last of the people who believe!  
Silent, while years engrave the brow;  
Silent — the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,  
The kings of modern thought are dumb;  
Silent they are, though not content,  
And wait to see the future come.  
They have the grief men had of yore,  
But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears  
This sea of time whereon we sail;  
Their voices were in all men's ears  
Who pass'd within their puissant hail.  
Still the same Ocean round us raves,  
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise  
And outcry of the former men?  
Say, have their sons obtain'd more joys?  
Say, is life lighter now than then?  
The sufferers died, they left their pain;  
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
With haughty scorn which mock'd the  
smart,  
Through Europe to the Aetolian shore  
The pageant of his bleeding heart?  
That thousands counted every groan,  
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze  
Carried thy lovely wail away,  
Musical through Italian trees  
That fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?  
Inheritors of thy distress  
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,  
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,  
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head  
From the fierce tempest of thine age  
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,  
Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!  
The world, which for an idle day  
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,  
Long since hath flung her weeds away.  
The eternal trifler breaks your spell;  
But we — we learnt your lore too well!

There may, perhaps, yet dawn an age,  
More fortunate, alas! than we,  
Which without hardness will be sage,  
And gay without frivolity.  
Sons of the world, oh, haste those years;  
But, till they rise, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe  
The exulting thunder of your race;  
You give the universe your law,  
You triumph over time and space.  
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,  
We mark them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade  
Beneath some old-world abbey wall  
Forgotten in a forest-glade  
And secret from the eyes of all;  
Deep, deep the greenwood round them  
waves,  
Their abbey, and its close of graves.

But, where the road runs near the stream,  
Oft through the trees they catch a glance  
Of passing troops in the sun's beam —  
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!  
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,  
To life, to cities, and to war.

And through the woods, another way,  
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,  
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,  
Round some old forest-lodge at morn;  
Gay dames are there in sylvan green,  
Laughter and cries — those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees  
Make their blood dance and chain their  
eyes;  
That bugle-music on the breeze  
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.  
Banner by turns and bugle woo:  
*Ye shy recluses, follow too!*

O children, what do ye reply? —  
'Action and pleasure, will ye roam  
Through these secluded dells to cry  
And call us? but too late ye come!  
Too late for us your call ye blow  
Whose bent was taken long ago.

'Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;  
We watch those yellow tapers shine,  
Emblems of hope over the grave,  
In the high altar's depth divine;  
The organ carries to our ear  
Its accents of another sphere.

'Fenced early in this cloistral round  
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,  
How should we grow in other ground?  
How should we flower in foreign air?  
Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease!  
And leave our desert to its peace!'

### TO MARGUERITE

[1857.]

We were apart! yet, day by day,  
I bade my heart more constant be;  
I bade it keep the world away,  
And grow a home for only thee;  
Nor fear'd but thy love likewise grew,  
Like mine, each day more tried, more true.

The fault was grave! I might have known,  
What far too soon, alas! I learn'd —  
The heart can bind itself alone,  
And faith is often unreturn'd.  
Self-sway'd our feelings ebb and swell!  
Thou lov'st no more; — Farewell! Farewell!

Farewell! — and thou, thou lonely heart,  
Which never yet without remorse  
Even for a moment didst depart  
From thy remote and sphered course  
To haunt the place where passions reign —  
Back to thy solitude again!

Back! with the conscious thrill of shame  
Which Luna felt, that summer-night,  
Flash through her pure immortal frame,  
When she forsook the starry height  
To hang over Endymion's sleep  
Upon the pine-grown Latmian steep —

Yet she, chaste queen, had never proved  
How vain a thing is mortal love,  
Wandering in Heaven, far removed;  
But thou hast long had place to prove  
This truth — to prove, and make thine own:  
'Thou hast been, shalt be, art, alone.'

Or, if not quite alone, yet they  
Which touch thee are unmaturing things —  
Ocean and clouds and night and day;  
Lorn autumns and triumphant springs;  
And life, and others' joy and pain,  
And love, if love, of happier men.

Of happier men! — for they, at least,  
Have dream'd two human hearts might  
blend  
In one, and were through faith released  
From isolation without end  
Prolong'd; nor knew, although not less  
Alone than thou, their loneliness!

### THYRSIS

[1867.]

A MONODY, to commemorate the author's  
friend, ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH, who  
died at Florence, 1861.

Thus yesterday, to-day, to-morrow come,  
They hustle one another and they pass;  
But all our hustling morrows only make  
The smooth to-day of God.  
*From LUCRETIUS, an unpublished Tragedy.*

How changed is here each spot man makes  
or fills!

In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the  
same;

The village-street its haunted mansion  
lacks,

And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,  
And from the roofs the twisted chim-  
ney-stacks;

Are ye too changed, ye hills?

See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men  
To-night from Oxford up your path-  
way strays!

Here came I often, often, in old days;  
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth  
Farm,

Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree  
crowns

The hill behind whose ridge the sunset  
flames?

The signal-elm, that looks on IIsley  
Downs,  
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the  
youthful Thames?—  
This winter-eve is warm,  
Humid the air; leafless, yet soft as spring,  
The tender purple spray on copse and  
briers;  
And that sweet City with her dreaming  
spires,  
She needs not June for beauty's heighten-ing.

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!  
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's  
power  
Befalls me wandering through this up-  
land dim;  
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour,  
Now seldom come I, since I came with  
him.  
That single elm-tree bright  
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?  
We prized it dearly; while it stood,  
we said,  
Our friend, the Scholar-Gipsy, was not  
dead;  
While the tree lived, he in these fields  
lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits  
here!  
But once I knew each field, each flower,  
each stick;  
And with the country-folk acquaintance  
made  
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built  
rick.  
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first  
assay'd.  
Ah me! this many a year  
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday!  
Needs must I lose them, needs with  
heavy heart  
Into the world and wave of men de-  
part;  
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.  
He loved each simple joy the country  
yields,  
He loved his mates; but yet he could  
not keep,  
For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,  
Here with the shepherds and the silly  
sheep.  
Some life of men unblest  
He knew, which made him droop, and  
fill'd his head.  
He went; his piping took a troubled  
sound  
Of storms that rage outside our happy  
ground;  
He could not wait their passing, he is  
dead!

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,  
When the year's primal burst of bloom is  
o'er,  
Before the roses and the longest day—  
When garden-walks, and all the grassy  
floor,  
With blossoms, red and white, of fallen  
May,  
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—  
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
From the wet field, through the vext  
garden-trees,  
Come with the volleying rain and toss-  
ing breeze:  
*The bloom is gone, and with the bloom  
go I.*

Too quick despainer, wherefore wilt thou  
go?  
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps  
come on,  
Soon will the musk carnations break  
and swell,  
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snap-  
dragon,  
Sweet-William with its homely cottage-  
smell,  
And stocks in fragrant blow;  
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
And groups under the dreaming garden  
trees,  
And the full moon, and the white even-  
ing star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!  
What matters it? next year he will re-  
turn,  
And we shall have him in the sweet  
spring-days,  
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling  
fern,  
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-  
ways,  
And scent of hay new-mown.  
But Thyrsis never more we swains shall  
see!  
See him come back, and cut a smoother  
reed,  
And blow a strain the world at last  
shall heed—  
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd  
thee.

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—  
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,  
Some good survivor with his flute  
would go,  
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate,  
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,  
And relax Pluto's brow,

And make leap up with joy the beauteous head  
Of Proserpine, among whose crownèd hair

Are flowers, first open'd on Sicilian air,  
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

O easy access to the hearer's grace  
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!

For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,  
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,  
She knew each lily white which Enna yields,

Each rose with blushing face;  
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.

But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!

Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd!

And we should tease her with our plaint in vain.

Well! wind-dispers'd and vain the words will be,

Yet, Thrysus, let me give my grief its hour

In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!

Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?

I know the wood which hides the daffodil,

I know the Fyfield tree,  
I know what white, what purple fritillaries

The grassy harvest of the river-fields,  
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,

And what sedg'd brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I? —

But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,  
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,

Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried,

High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,

Hath since our day put by  
The coronals of that forgotten time.

Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,

And only in the hidden brookside gleam Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who, by the boatman's door,

Above the locks, above the boating throng,

Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the Wyntham flats,

Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,  
And darting swallows, and light water-gnats,

We track'd the shy Thames shore?  
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell

Of our boat passing heav'd the river-grass,  
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass? —

They all are gone, and thou art gone as well.

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night

In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.  
I see her veil draw soft across the day,  
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade  
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;

I feel her finger light  
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;

The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,

The heart less bounding at emotion new,

And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short

To the unpractis'd eye of sanguine youth;  
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,

The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,

Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!

Unbreachable the fort  
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall.

And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,

And near and real the charm of thy repose,

And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss  
Of quiet; — Look! adown the dusk hill-side,

A troop of Oxford hunters going home,  
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!

From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come —

Quick let me fly, and cross  
Into yon further field! — 'Tis done; and see,

Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify  
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,  
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,  
The white fog creeps from bush to bush  
about,  
The west unflushes, the high stars grow  
bright,  
And in the scatter'd farms the lights  
come out.  
I cannot reach the Signal-Tree to-night,  
Yet, happy omen, hail!  
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno vale  
(For there thine earth-forgetting eye-  
lids keep  
The morningless and unawakening  
sleep  
Under the flowery oleanders pale),  
Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our Tree is there!  
Ah, vain! These English fields, this up-  
land dim,  
These brambles pale with mist engar-  
landed,  
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for  
him.  
To a boon southern country he is fled,  
And now in happier air,  
Wandering with the great Mother's train  
divine  
(And purer or more subtle soul than  
thee,  
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not  
see!)  
Within a folding of the Apennine,  
Thou hearest the immortal strains of old.  
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain  
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian  
king,  
For thee the Lityurses song again  
Young Daphnis with his silver voice  
doth sing;  
Sings his Sicilian fold,  
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded  
eyes;  
And how a call celestial round him rang  
And heavenward from the fountain-  
brink he sprang,  
And all the marvel of the golden skies.  
There thou art gone, and me thou leavest  
here  
Sole in these fields; yet will I not de-  
spair;  
Despair I will not, while I yet descry  
'Neath the soft canopy of English air  
That lonely Tree against the western  
sky  
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,  
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!  
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull  
the hay,  
Woods with anemones in flower till  
May,  
Know him a wanderer still; then why not  
me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,  
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.  
This does not come with houses or with  
gold,  
With place, with honour, and a flattering  
crew;  
'Tis not in the world's market bought  
and sold.  
But the smooth-slipping weeks  
Drop by, and leave its seeker still un-  
tired;  
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,  
He wends unfollow'd, he must house  
alone;  
Yet on he fares, by his own heart in-  
spired.  
Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wert  
bound,  
Thou wanderedst with me for a little  
hour;  
Men gave thee nothing, but this happy  
quest,  
If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee  
power,  
If men procured thee trouble, gave  
thee rest.  
And this rude Cumner ground,  
Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet  
fields,  
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful  
time,  
Here was thine height of strength, thy  
golden prime;  
And still the haunt beloved a virtue  
yields.  
What though the music of thy rustic flute  
Kept not for long its happy, country tone,  
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy  
note,  
Of men contention-tost, of men who  
groan,  
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and  
tired thy throat—  
It fail'd, and thou wast mute;  
Yet hadst thou alway visions of our  
light,  
And long with men of care thou couldst  
not stay,  
And soon thy foot resumed its wander-  
ing way,  
Left human haunt, and on alone till  
night.  
.Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits  
here!  
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,  
Thyrsis, in reach of sheep-bells is my  
home!  
Then through the great town's harsh,  
heart-wearying roar,  
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,  
To chase fatigue and fear:

*Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.*

*Roam on! the light we sought is shining still,*

*Dost thou ask proof? Our Tree yet crowns the hill,*

*Our Scholar travels yet the loved hillside.*

### EAST LONDON

[1867.]

'TWAS August, and the fierce sun overhead Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,

And the pale weaver, through his windows seen

In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited;

I met a preacher there I knew, and said: 'Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?'

'Bravely!' said he; 'for I of late have been Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*'

O human soul! as long as thou canst so Set up a mark of everlasting light, Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,

To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam,

Not with lost toil thou labourest through the night!

Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

### WEST LONDON

[1867.]

CROUCH'D on the pavement close by Belgrave Square

A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied;

A babe was in her arms, and at her side

A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.

Some labouring men, whose work lay somewhere there,

Pass'd opposite; she touch'd her girl, who hied

Across, and begg'd, and came back satisfied. The rich she had let pass with frozen stare.

Thought I: Above her state this spirit towers;

She will not ask of aliens, but of friends, Of sharers in a common human fate.

She turns from that cold succour, which attends

The unknown little from the unknowing great,

And points us to a better time than ours.

### ANTI-DESPERATION

[1867.]

LONG fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,

How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare! Christ, some one says, was human as we are;

No judge eyes us from heaven, our sin to scan;

We live no more, when we have done our span.

'Well, then, for Christ,' thou answerest, 'who can care?

From sin, which heaven records not, why forbear?

Live we like brutes our life without a plan!

So answerest thou; but why not rather say: 'Hath man no second life? — Pitch this one high!

Sits there no judge in heaven, our sin to see? —

'More strictly, then, the inward judge obey! Was Christ a man like us? — Ah! let us try

If we then, too, can be such men as he!'

### IMMORTALITY

[1867.]

Foul'd by our fellow men, depress'd, outworn,

We leave the brutal world to take its way, And, *Patience!* in another life, we say, *The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne!*

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn

The world's poor, routed leavings; or will they,

Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day, Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be Kept on after the grave, but not begun; And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing — only he,

His soul well-knit, and all his battles won, Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

### WORLDLY PLACE

[1867.]

*Even in a palace, life may be led well!* So spoke the imperial sage, purest of men,

Marcus Aurelius. — But the stifling den Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell,

Our freedom for a little bread we sell,  
And drudge under some foolish master's  
ken,

Who rates us, if we peer outside our pen—  
Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell?

*Even in a palace!* On his truth sincere,  
Who spoke these words, no shadow ever  
came;

And when my ill-school'd spirit is afame

Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,  
I'll stop, and say: 'There were no suc-  
cour here!'

The aids to noble life are all within.'

#### AUSTERITY OF POETRY

[1867.]

THAT son of Italy who tried to blow,<sup>1</sup>  
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,  
In his light youth amid a festal throng  
Sate with his bride to see a public show.

Fair was the bride, and on her front did  
glow

Youth like a star; and what to youth be-  
long,

Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation  
strong.

A prop gave way! crash fell a platform!  
lo,

Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she  
lay!

Shuddering they drew her garments off —  
and found

A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white  
skin.

Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young,  
gay,

Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within.

#### EAST AND WEST

[1867.]

IN the bare midst of Anglesey they show  
Two springs which close by one another  
play,

And, 'Thirteen hundred years agone,' they  
say,

'Two saints met often where those waters  
flow.

'One came from Penmon, westward, and a  
glow

Whiten'd his face from the sun's fronting  
ray.

Eastward the other, from the dying day;  
And he with unsunn'd<sup>2</sup> face did always go.'

<sup>1</sup> Giacopone di Todi.

*Seiriol the Bright, Kybi the Dark*, men said.  
The Seér from the East was then in light,  
The Seér from the West was then in shade.

Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sun-  
shine bright

The man of the bold West now comes  
array'd;

He of the mystic East is touch'd with night.

#### DOVER BEACH

[1867.]

THE sea is calm to-night,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the Straits; — on the French coast,  
the light

Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England  
stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil  
bay.

Come to the window, sweet is the night  
air!

Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd  
sand,

Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and  
fling,

At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round  
earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating to the breath  
Of the night-wind down the vast edges  
drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle  
and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

*Depth of pessimism not characteristic  
of Arnold.*

## GROWING OLD

[1867.]

WHAT is it to grow old?  
 Is it to lose the glory of the form,  
 The lustre of the eye?  
 Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?  
 Yes, but not this alone.  
 Is it to feel our strength—  
 Not our bloom only, but our strength—  
 decay?  
 Is it to feel each limb  
 Grow stiffer, every function less exact,  
 Each nerve more weakly strung?  
 Yes, this, and more! but not,  
 Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dream'd  
 'twould be!  
 'Tis not to have our life  
 Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset glow,  
 A golden day's decline!

'Tis not to see the world  
 As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,  
 And heart profoundly stirr'd;  
 And weep, and feel the fullness of the past,  
 The years that are no more!

It is to spend long days  
 And not once feel that we were ever  
 young.  
 It is to add, immured  
 In the hot prison of the present, month  
 To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,  
 And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.  
 Deep in our hidden heart  
 Fester the dull remembrance of a change,  
 But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—  
 When we are frozen up within, and quite  
 The phantom of ourselves,  
 To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost  
 Which blamed the living man.

## THE LAST WORD

[1867.]

CREEP into thy narrow bed,  
 Creep, and let no more be said!  
 Vain thy onset! all stands fast;  
 Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!  
 Geese are swans and swans are geese.  
 Let them have it how they will!  
 Thou art tired; best be still!

They out-talk'd thee, hissed thee, tore thee.  
 Better men fared thus before thee;  
 Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,  
 Hotly charged—and broke at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!  
 Let the victors, when they come,  
 When the forts of folly fall,  
 Find thy body by the wall.

## A WISH

[1867.]

I ASK not that my bed of death  
 From bands of greedy heirs be free;  
 For these besiege the latest breath  
 Of fortune's favour'd sons, not me.

I ask not each kind soul to keep  
 Tearless, when of my death he hears;  
 Let those who will, if any, weep!  
 There are worse plagues on earth than  
 tears.

I ask but that my death may find  
 The freedom to my life denied;  
 Ask but the folly of mankind,  
 Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Spare me the whispering, crowded room,  
 The friends who come, and gape, and go;  
 The ceremonious air of gloom—  
 All, that makes death a hideous show!

Nor bring, to see me cease to live,  
 Some doctor full of phrase and fame,  
 To shake his sapient head and give  
 The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustom'd toll  
 Of the poor sinner bound for death,  
 His brother doctor of the soul,  
 To canvass with official breath

The future and its viewless things—  
 That undiscover'd mystery  
 Which one who feels death's winnowing  
 wings  
 Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these! but let me be,  
 While all around in silence lies,  
 Moved to the window near, and see  
 Once more before my dying eyes

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn  
 The wide aerial landscape spread—  
 The world which was ere I was born.  
 The world which lasts when I am dead.

Which never was the friend of *one*,  
 Nor promised love it could not give,  
 But lit for all its generous sun,  
 And lived itself, and made us live.

There let me gaze, till I become  
 In soul with what I gaze on wed!  
 To feel the universe my home;  
 To have before my mind—instead

Of the sick-room, the mortal strife,  
The turmoil for a little breath—  
The pure eternal course of life,  
Not human combatings with death.

Thus feeling, gazing, let me grow  
Compos'd, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;  
Then willing let my spirit go  
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

### PIS-ALLER

[1867.]

'MAN is blind because of sin;  
Revelation makes him sure.  
Without that, who looks within,  
Looks in vain, for all's obscure.'

Nay, look closer into man!  
Tell me, can you find indeed  
Nothing sure, no moral plan  
Clear prescribed, without your creed?

'No, I nothing can perceive;  
Without that, all's dark for men.  
That, or nothing, I believe.'—  
For God's sake, believe it then!

### RUGBY CHAPEL

NOVEMBER, 1857

[1867.]

COLDLY, sadly descends  
The autumn evening. The Field  
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts  
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,  
Fade into dimness apace,  
Silent; — hardly a shout  
From a few boys late at their play!  
The lights come out in the street,  
In the school-room windows; but cold,  
Solemn, unlighted, austere,  
Through the gathering darkness, arise  
The Chapel walls, in whose bound  
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom  
Of the autumn evening. But ah!  
That word, *gloom*, to my mind  
Brings thee back in the light  
Of thy radiant vigour again!  
In the gloom of November we pass'd  
Days not of gloom at thy side;  
Seasons impair'd not the ray  
Of thine even cheerfulness clear.  
Such thou wast; and I stand  
In the autumn evening, and think  
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round  
Since thou arosest to tread,  
In the summer morning, the road  
Of death, at a call unforeseen,  
Sudden. For fifteen years,

We who till then in thy shade  
Rested as under the boughs  
Of a mighty oak, have endured  
Sunshine and rain as we might,  
Bare, unshaded, alone,  
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore  
Tarriest thou now? For that force,  
Surely, has not been left vain!  
Somewhere, surely, afar,  
In the sounding labour-house vast  
Of being, is practised that strength,  
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,  
Conscious or not of the past,  
Still thou performest the word  
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live,  
Prompt, unwearied, as here!  
Still thou upraisest with zeal  
The humble good from the ground,  
Sternly repressest the bad.  
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse  
Those who with half-open eyes  
Tread the border-land dim  
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,  
Succourest; — this was thy work,  
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life  
Of mortal men on the earth? —  
Most men eddy about  
Here and there — eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate,  
Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving  
Nothing, and then they die —  
Perish; and no one asks  
Who or what they have been,  
More than he asks what waves  
In the moonlit solitudes mild  
Of the midmost 'Ocean, have swell'd,  
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst  
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,  
Not with the crowd to be spent,  
Not without aim to go round  
In an eddy of purposeless dust  
Effort unmeaning and vain.  
Ah yes, some of us strive  
Not without action to die  
Fruitless, but something to snatch  
From dull oblivion, nor all  
Glut the devouring grave!  
We, we have chosen our path —  
Path to a clear-purposed goal,  
Path of advance! but it leads  
A long, steep journey, through sunk  
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow!  
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth;  
Then, on the height, comes the storm!

Thunder crashes from rock  
To rock, the cataracts reply;  
Lightnings dazzle our eyes;  
Roaring torrents have breach'd  
The track, the stream-bed descends  
In the place where the wayfarer once  
Planted his footstep — the spray  
Boils o'er its borders; aloft,  
The unseen snow-beds dislodge  
Their hanging ruin; — alas,  
Havoc is made in our train!  
Friends who set forth at our side  
Falter, are lost in the storm!  
We, we only, are left!  
With frowning foreheads, with lips  
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,  
On — and at nightfall, at last,  
Come to the end of our way,  
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;  
Where the gaunt and taciturn Host  
Stands on the threshold, the wind  
Shaking his thin white hairs —  
Holds his lantern to scan  
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:  
Whom in our party we bring?  
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring  
Only ourselves; we lost  
Sight of the rest in the storm.  
Hardly ourselves we fought through,  
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.  
Friends, companions, and train  
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*  
Be saved, my father! *alone*  
Conquer and come to thy goal,  
Leaving the rest in the wild.  
We were weary, and we  
Fearful, and we, in our march,  
Fain to drop down and to die.  
Still thou turnest, and still  
Beckonesth the trembler, and still  
Gavest the weary thy hand!  
If, in the paths of the world,  
Stones might have wounded thy feet,  
Toil or dejection have tried  
Thy spirit, of that we saw  
Nothing! to us thou wert still  
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm.  
Therefore to thee it was given  
Many to save with thyself;  
And, at the end of thy day,  
O faithful shepherd! to come,  
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And through thee I believe  
In the noble and great who are gone;  
Pure souls honour'd and blest  
By former ages, who else —

Such, so soulless, so poor,  
Is the race of men whom I see —  
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,  
Seem'd but a cry of desire.  
Yes! I believe that there lived  
Others like thee in the past,  
Not like the men of the crowd  
Who all round me to-day  
Bluster or cringe, and make life  
Hideous, and arid, and vile;  
But souls temper'd with fire,  
Fervent, heroic, and good,  
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God! — or sons  
Shall I not call you? because  
Not as servants ye knew  
Your Father's innermost mind,  
His, who unwillingly sees  
One of his little ones lost —  
Yours is the praise, if mankind  
Hath not as yet in its march  
Fainted, and fallen, and died!  
See! in the rocks of the world  
Marches the host of mankind,  
A feeble, wavering line.  
Where are they tending? — A God  
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.—  
Ah, but the way is so long!  
Years they have been in the wild!  
Sore thirst plagues them; the rocks,  
Rising all round, overawe.  
Factions divide them; their host  
Threatens to break, to dissolve.  
Ah, keep, keep them combined!  
Else, of the myriads who fill  
That army, not one shall arrive!  
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks  
Labour for ever in vain,  
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need  
Of your fainting, dispirited race,  
Ye, like angels, appear,  
Radiant with ardour divine.  
Beacons of hope, ye appear!  
Languor is not in your heart,  
Weakness is not in your word,  
Weariness not on your brow.  
Ye alight in our van; at your voice,  
Panic, despair, flee away.  
Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, re-inspire the brave.  
Order, courage, return.  
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,  
Follow your steps as ye go.  
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
Stablish, continue our march,  
On, to the bound of the waste,  
On, to the City of God.

# EDWARD FITZGERALD

[1809-1883]

## THE RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

[1859, 1868, 1872, 1879.]

I

WAKE! For the Sun who scatter'd into flight  
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,  
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n and strikes  
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,<sup>1</sup>  
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,  
"When all the Temple is prepared within,  
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

III

And, as the cock crew, those who stood before  
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!  
You know how little while we have to stay,  
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,<sup>2</sup>  
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,  
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on  
the Bough  
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.<sup>3</sup>

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,<sup>4</sup>  
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;  
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,  
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

<sup>1</sup> The "false dawn," a well-known phenomenon in the East, is a transient light appearing on the horizon about an hour before the true dawn.

<sup>2</sup> A new year beginning with the vernal equinox, about the 21st of March, is still commemorated by a Persian festival. The "white hand of Moses" is a figure for May blossoms.

<sup>3</sup> Jesus suspiring from the ground has reference to his healing power, which according to the Persians resided in his breath.

<sup>4</sup> Iram, planted by King Shaddád, and now sunk somewhere in the Sands of Arabia. Jamshyd's Seven-ring'd Cup was typical of the 7 Heavens, 7 Planets, 7 Seas, etc., and was a Divining Cup (Edward Fitzgerald). Jamshyd is a mythical Persian king.

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine High-piping Pehleví,<sup>5</sup> with "Wine! Wine! Wine!"

Red Wine!" — the Nightingale cries to the Rose  
That sallow cheek<sup>6</sup> of hers to incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring  
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:

The Bird of Time has but a little way  
To flutter — and the Bird is on the Wing

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,  
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,  
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,  
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;  
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?  
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose  
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád<sup>7</sup> away.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to do  
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?  
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,<sup>8</sup>  
Or Hátim call to supper — heed not you.

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown.  
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot —

And Peace to Mahmúd<sup>9</sup> on his golden Throne!

<sup>5</sup> Pehleví, probably Sanscrit.

<sup>6</sup> Yellow roses, common in Persia, are referred to.

<sup>7</sup> Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú are Persian sovereigns.

<sup>8</sup> Rustum is the Hercules of Persia; Zál, his father.

<sup>9</sup> Probably Mahmúd of Ghazni, the Persian conqueror who flourished in the tenth century.

## XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and  
Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—  
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

## XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and  
some  
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;  
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,  
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!<sup>10</sup>

## XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,  
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,  
At once the silken tassel of my Purse  
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden  
throw."

## XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,  
And those who flung it to the winds like  
Rain,  
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd  
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

## XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts  
upon  
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,  
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,  
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

## XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai  
Whose Portals are alternate Night and  
Day,  
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp  
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

## XVIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd glорied and  
drank deep:<sup>11</sup>  
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the  
Wild Ass  
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his  
Sleep.

## XIX

I sometimes think that never blows so red  
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;  
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears  
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely  
Head.

<sup>10</sup> Beaten outside a palace.

<sup>11</sup> Persepolis, an ancient city of Persia, now in ruins, supposed to have been built by the Sultan Jamshyd. Bahrám was another Persian sovereign of luxurious habits.

## XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green  
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—  
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows  
From what once lovely Lip it springs un-  
seen!

## XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears  
To-DAY of past Regret and future Fears:  
To-morrow! — Why, To-morrow I may  
be  
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand  
Years.

## XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the  
best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath  
prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two  
before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest.

## XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room  
They left, and Summer dresses in new  
bloom,  
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of  
Earth  
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—  
for whom?

## XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may  
spend,  
Before we too into the Dust descend;  
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,  
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and  
— sans End!

## XXV

Alike for those who for To-DAY prepare,  
And those that after some To-MORROW  
stare,  
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness  
cries,  
"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor  
There."

## XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who dis-  
cuss'd  
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are  
thrust  
. Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words  
to Scorn  
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt  
with Dust.

## XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argu-  
ment  
About it and about: but evermore  
Came out by the same Door where in I  
went.

## XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,  
And with mine own hand wrought to make  
it grow;  
And this was all the Harvest that I  
reap'd—  
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

## XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing  
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;  
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,  
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

## XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried  
*Whence?*  
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried  
hence!  
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine  
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

## XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate  
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,  
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;  
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

## XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no  
Key;  
There was the Veil through which I might  
not see:  
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE  
There was—and then no more of THEE  
and ME.<sup>12</sup>

## XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the seas that  
mourn  
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;  
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs  
reveal'd  
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and  
Morn.

## XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind  
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find  
A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,  
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN  
THEE BLIND!"

## XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn  
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:  
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While  
you live,  
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall  
return."

<sup>12</sup> Me-and-Thee denotes some individual existence or personality distinct from the whole.

## XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive  
Articulation answer'd, once did live,  
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I  
kiss'd,  
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

## XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way  
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay;  
And with its all-obliterated Tongue  
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently,  
pray!"

## XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old  
Down Man's successive generations roll'd  
Of such a clod of saturated Earth  
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

## XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we  
throw<sup>13</sup>  
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below  
To quench the fire of Anguish in some  
Eye  
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

## XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup,  
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks  
up,  
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n  
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

## XLI

Perplexed no more with Human or Divine,  
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,  
And lose your fingers in the tresses of  
The Cypress-sleender Minister of Wine.

## XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you  
press,  
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;  
Think then you are To-DAY what YES-  
TERDAY  
You were—To-MORROW you shall not be  
less.

## XLIII

So when the Angel of the darker Drink  
At last shall find you by the river-brink,  
And offering his Cup, invite your Soul  
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall  
not shrink.

## XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,  
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,  
Were't not a Shame—were't not a  
Shame for him  
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

<sup>13</sup> The custom, still extant in Persia, of throwing a little wine on the ground to refresh the dust of some poor wine-drinker who is dead.

## XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest

A Sultán to the realm of Death addrest;  
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

## XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your Account, and mine, should know the like no more;

The Eternal Sáki<sup>14</sup> from the Bowl has pour'd Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

## XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past, Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,

Which of our Coming and Departure heeds

As the Sev'n Seas should heed a pebble-cast.

## XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste— And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reacht

The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

## XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend

About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—

And upon what, prithee, does life depend?

## L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—

Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—

Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,

And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

## LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins

Running Quicksilver-like, eludes your pains;

Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;<sup>15</sup> and

They change and perish all—but He remains;

## LII

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold

Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd

Which, for the Pastime of Eternity, He doth himself contrive, enact, behold.

## LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,

You gaze To-DAY, while You are You— how then T-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

## LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit

Of This and That endeavour and dispute; Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

## LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse

I made a Second Marriage in my house; Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,

And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

## LVI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line,

And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define, Of all that one should care to fathom, I Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

## LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say, Reduced the Year to better reckoning?— Nay,

Twas only striking from the Calendar Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

## LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape, Game shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape

Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the Grape!

## LIX

The Grape that can with Logic Absolute The Two and Seventy jarring Sects confute:

The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

## LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord, That all the misbelieving and black Horde<sup>16</sup> Of fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul

Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

<sup>14</sup> Sáki is the cup-bearer and dispenser of wine.  
<sup>15</sup> From fish to moon.

<sup>16</sup> An allusion to the Sultan Mahmúd's conquest of India and its dark people.

## LXI.

Why, be this Juice the growth of God,  
who dare  
blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?  
A Blessing, we should use it, should we  
not?  
And if a Curse — why, then, Who set it  
there?

## LXII.

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,  
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on  
trust.  
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner  
Drink,  
To fill the Cup — when crumbled into  
Dust!

## LXIII.

O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!  
One thing at least is certain — This Life  
flies;  
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies:  
The Flower that once has blown for ever  
dies.

## LXIV.

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads  
who  
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness  
through.  
Not one returns to tell us of the Road  
Which to discover we must travel too.

## LXV.

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd  
Who rose before us, and as Prophets  
burn'd.  
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from  
Sleep,  
They told their comrades, and to Sleep re-  
turn'd.

## LXVI.

I sent my soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of that After-life to spell:  
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,  
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and  
Hell."

## LXVII.

Heav'n, but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,  
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire  
Cast on the Darkness into which Our-  
selves,  
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon ex-  
pire.

## LXVIII.

We are no other than a moving row  
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go  
Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern  
held  
In Midnight by the Master of the Show!"

<sup>7</sup> A revolving magic lantern, still used in India, with various figures painted inside.

## LXIX.

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays  
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and  
Days:  
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and  
slays,  
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

## LXX.

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and  
Noes.  
But Here or There as strikes the Player  
goes;  
And He that toss'd you down into the  
Field,  
He knows about it all — he knows — HE  
knows!

## LXXI.

The Moving Finger writes: and, having  
written,  
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

## LXXII.

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and  
die.  
Lift not your hands to It for help —  
for It  
As impotently moves as you or I.

## LXXIII.

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last  
Man knead,  
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the  
Seed;  
And the first Morning of Creation wrote  
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall  
read.

## LXXIV.

YESTERDAY This Day's Madness did pre-  
pare;  
TO-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:  
Drink! for you know not whence you  
came, nor why:  
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor  
where.

## LXXV.

I tell you this — When, started from the  
Goal,  
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal  
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mashrari they  
hung"  
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

## LXXVI.

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about  
If clangs my Being — let the Dervish float;  
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,  
That shall unlock the Door he howls with-  
out.

<sup>7</sup> Parwin and Mashrari are the Pleiades and Jupiter.

## LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True  
Light  
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me  
quite,  
One Flash of It within the Tavern  
caught  
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

## LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke  
A conscious Something to resent the yoke  
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain  
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

## LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be re-  
paid  
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-  
ailay'd—  
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,  
And cannot answer—Oh, the sorry trade!

## LXXX

O Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with  
Gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil  
round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

## LXXXI

O Thou, who Man of Baser Earth didst  
make,  
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of  
Man  
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—  
and take!

## LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day  
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán<sup>20</sup> away,  
Once more within the Potter's house  
alone  
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of  
Clay.

## LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and  
small,  
That stood along the floor and by the wall;  
And some loquacious Vessels were; and  
some  
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

## LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain  
"My substance of the common Earth was  
ta'en  
"And to this Figure moulded, to be broke.  
"Or trampled back to shapeless Earth  
again."

<sup>20</sup> Ramazán, the Mohammedan month of fasting.

## LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy  
Would break the Bowl from which he  
drank in joy;  
"And He that with his hand the Vessel  
made  
"Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

## LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake  
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make;  
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:  
"What! did the Hand then of the Potter  
shake?"

## LXXXVII

Whereat someone of the loquacious Lot—  
I think a Sufi pipkin—waxing hot—  
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me  
then,  
"Who is the Potter, pray, and who the  
Pot?"

## LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who  
tell  
"Of one who threatens he will toss to  
Hell  
"The luckless Pots he marr'd in makin'-  
Fish!  
"He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be  
well."

## LXXXIX

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make  
or buy,  
"My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:  
"But fill me with the old familiar Juice,  
"Methinks I might recover by and by."

## XC

So while the Vessels one by one were  
speaking,  
The little Moon look'd in that all were  
seeking:  
And then they jogg'd each other,  
"Brother! Brother!  
"Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot  
a-creaking!"

## XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,  
And wash the Body whence the Life has  
died,  
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,  
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

## XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare  
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air  
As not a True believer passing by  
But shall be overtaken unaware.

## xciii

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long  
Have done my credit in this World much  
    wrong:  
    Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow  
    Cup,  
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

## xciv

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before  
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?  
    And then and then came Spring, and  
    Rose-in-hand  
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

## xcv

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,  
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—  
    Well,

I wonder often what the Vintners buy  
One-half so precious as the stuff they sell.

## xcvi

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the  
    Rose!  
That Youth's sweet scented manuscript  
    should close!  
    The Nightingale that in the branches  
    sang,  
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who  
    knows!

## xcvii

Would but the desert of the Fountain yield  
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, re-  
veal'd,

To which the fainting Traveler might  
spring,  
As springs the trampled herbage of the  
field!

## xcviii

Would but some wing'd Angel ere too late  
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,  
    And make the stern Recorder otherwise  
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

## xcix

Ah Love! could you and I with Him con-  
spire  
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things  
entire,  
    Would not we shatter it to bits—and  
    then  
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

## c

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—  
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;  
    How oft hereafter rising look for us  
Through this same Garden—and for *one*  
    in vain!

## ci

And when like her, O Sáki, you shall pass  
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the  
    Grass,  
    And in your joyous errand reach the spot  
Where I made One—turn down an empty  
    Glass!

# JAMES THOMSON

[1834-1882]

## FROM THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

[Published 1874.]

### PROEM

Lo, thus, as prostrate, "In the dust I write  
My heart's deep languor and my soul's  
sad tears."

Yet why evoke the spectres of black night  
To blot the sunshine of exultant years?  
Why disinter dead faith from mouldering  
hidden?

Why break the seals of mute despair un-  
bidden,  
And wail life's discords into careless  
ears?

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles  
To show the bitter old and wrinkled  
truth

Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,  
False dreams, false hopes, false masks  
and modes of youth;

Because it gives some sense of power and  
passion

In helpless impotence to try to fashion  
Our woe in living words how'er uncouth.

Surely I write not for the hopeful young,  
Or those who deem their happiness of  
worth,

Or such as pasture and grow fat among  
The shows of life and feel nor doubt nor  
dearth,

Or pious spirits with a God above them  
To sanctify and glorify and love them,  
Or sages who foresee a heaven on earth.

For none of these I write, and none of these  
Could read the writing if they deigned  
to try:

So may they flourish, in their due degrees,  
On our sweet earth and in their unplaced  
sky.

If any cares for the weak words here  
written,

It must be some one desolate, Fate-smitten,  
Whose faith and hope are dead, and who  
would die.

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer  
In that same city of tremendous night,  
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir  
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;

"I suffer mute and lonely, yet another  
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother  
Travels the same wild paths though out  
of sight."

O sad Fraternity, do I unfold  
Your dolorous mysteries shrouded from  
of yore?  
Nay, be assured; no secret can be told  
To any who divined it not before:  
None uninitiate by many a presage  
Will comprehend the language of the mes-  
sage,  
Although proclaimed aloud for evermore.

### I

The City is of Night; perchance of Death,  
But certainly of Night; for never there  
Can come the lucid morning's fragrant  
breath

After the dewy dawning's cold grey air;  
The moon and stars may shine with scorn  
or pity;  
The sun has never visited that city,  
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.

Dissolveth like a dream of night away;  
Though present in distempered gloom of  
thought

And deadly weariness of heart all day.  
But when a dream night after night is  
brought  
Throughout a week, and such weeks few or  
many

Recur each year for several years, can any  
Discern that dream from real life in  
aught?

For life is but a dream whose shapes re-  
turn,  
Some frequently, some seldom, some by  
night

And some by day, some night and day:  
we learn,  
The while all change and many vanish  
quite,

In their recurrence with recurrent changes  
A certain seeming order; where this ranges  
We count things real; such is memory's  
micht.

A river girds the city west and south,  
The main north channel of a broad la-  
goon,

Regurgiting with the salt tides from the mouth;  
Waste marshes shine and glister to the moon  
For leagues, then moorland black, then stony ridges;  
Great piers and causeways, many noble bridges,  
Connect the town and islet suburbs strewn.

Upon an easy slope it lies at large,  
And scarcely overlaps the long curved crest  
Which swells out two leagues from the river marge.  
A trackless wilderness rolls north and west,  
Savannahs, savage woods, enormous mountains,  
Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains;  
And eastward rolls the shipless sea's unrest.

The city is not ruinous, although  
Great ruins of an unremembered past,  
With others of a few short years ago  
More sad, are found within its precincts vast.  
The street-lamps always burn; but scarce  
a casement  
In house or palace front from roof to basement  
Doth glow or gleam athwart the mirk air cast.

The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms,  
Amidst the soundless solitudes immense  
Of ranged mansions dark and still as tombs.  
The silence which benumbs or strains  
the sense  
Fulfils with awe the soul's despair unweeping:  
Myriads of habitants are ever sleeping,  
Or dead, or fled from nameless pestilence!

Yet as in some necropolis you find  
Perchance one mourner to a thousand dead,  
So there; worn faces that look deaf and blind  
Like tragic masks of stone. With weary tread,  
Each wrapt in his own doom, they wander, wander,  
Or sit foredone and desolately ponder  
Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head.

Mature men chiefly, few in age or youth,  
A woman rarely, now and then a child:  
A child! If here the heart turns sick with ruth

To see a little one from birth defiled,  
Or lame or blind, as preordained to languish  
Through youthless life, think how it bleeds  
with anguish  
To meet one erring in that homeless wild.

They often murmur to themselves, they speak

To one another seldom, for their woe  
Broods maddening inwardly and scorns to wreak  
Itself abroad; and if at whiles it grow  
To frenzy which must rave, none heeds  
the clamour,  
Unless there waits some victim of like glamour,  
To rave in turn, who lends attentive show.

The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;  
There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;

The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,  
A night seems timeless hell. This dreadful strain  
Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,  
Or which some moments' stupor but increases,  
This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.

They leave all hope behind who enter there:  
One certitude while sane they cannot leave,

One anodyne for torture and despair;  
The certitude of Death, which no reprieve  
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,  
But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render  
That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave.

## IV

He stood alone within the spacious square  
Declaiming from the central grassy mound,  
With head uncovered and with streaming hair,  
As if large multitudes were gathered round:  
A stalwart shape, the gestures full of might,  
The glances burning with unnatural light:  
As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: All was black,  
In heaven no single star, on earth no track;

A brooding hush without a stir or note,  
The air so thick it clotted in my throat;  
And thus for hours; then some enormous  
things  
Swooped past with savage cries and clank-  
ing wings:

    But I strode on austere;  
    No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: Eyes of fire  
Glared at me throbbing with a starved de-  
sire;  
The hoarse and heavy and carnivorous  
breath  
Was hot upon me from deep jaws of  
death;  
Sharp claws, swift talons, fleshless fingers  
cold  
Plucked at me from the bushes, tried to  
hold:  
    But I strode on austere;  
    No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: Lo you,  
there,  
That hillock burning with a brazen glare;  
Those myriad dusky flames with points  
a-glow  
Which writhed and hissed and darted to  
and fro;  
A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-  
mell  
For Devil's roll-call and some fête of Hell:  
    Yet I strode on austere;  
    No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert; Meteors ran  
And crossed their javelins on the black  
sky-span;  
The zenith opened to a gulf of flame,  
The dreadful thunderbolts jarred earth's  
fixed frame;  
The ground all heaved in waves of fire  
that surged  
And weltered round me sole there unsub-  
merged:  
    Yet I strode on austere;  
    No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: Air once  
more,  
And I was close upon a wild sea-shore;  
Enormous cliffs arose on either hand,  
The deep tide thundered up a league-broad  
strand;  
White foambelts seethed there, wan spray  
swept and flew;  
The sky broke, moon and stars and clouds  
and blue:  
    And I strode on austere;  
    No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: On the left  
The sun arose and crowned a broad crag-  
cleft;

There stopped and burned out black, except  
a rim,  
A bleeding eyeless socket, red and dim;  
Whereon the moon fell suddenly south-  
west,  
And stood above the right-hand cliffs at  
rest:

    Still I strode on austere;  
    No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: From the  
right

A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;  
A woman with a red lamp in her hand,  
Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;  
O desolation moving with such grace!  
O anguish with such beauty in thy face!

    I fell as on my bier,  
    Hope travailed with such fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: I was  
twain,

Two selves distinct that cannot join again;  
One stood apart and knew but could not  
stir,  
And watched the other stark in swoon and  
her;  
And she came on, and never turned aside.  
Between such sun and moon and roaring  
tide:

    And as she came more near  
    My soul grew mad with fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: Hell is mild  
And piteous matched with that accursed  
wild;

A large black sign was on her breast that  
bowed,  
A broad black band ran down her snow-  
white shroud;  
That lamp she held was her own burning  
heart,  
Whose blood-drops trickled step by step  
apart:

    The mystery was clear;  
    Mad rage had swallowed fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: By the sea  
She knelt and bent above that senseless me;  
Those lamp-drops fell upon my white brow  
there,

She tried to cleanse them with her tears  
and hair;  
She murmured words of pity, love, and  
woe,

She heeded not the level rushing flow:  
    And mad with rage and fear,  
    I stood stonebound so near.

As I came through the desert thus it was,  
As I came through the desert: When the tide

Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,  
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they were borne

Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;  
I know the whole sea cannot quench that heart,

Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two apart:

They love; their doom is drear,  
Yet they nor hope nor fear;  
But I, what do I here?

## VIII

While I still lingered on that river-walk,  
And watched the tide as black as our black doom,

I heard another couple join in talk,  
And saw them to the left hand in the gloom

Seated against an elm bole on the ground,  
Their eyes intent upon the stream profound.

"I never knew another man on earth  
But had some joy and solace in his life,  
Some chance of triumph in the dreadful strife:

My doom has been unmitigated dearth."

"We gaze upon the river, and we note  
The various vessels large and small that float,

Ignoring every wrecked and sunken boat."

"And yet I asked no splendid dower, no spoil

Of sway or fame or rank or even wealth;  
But homely love with common food and health,

And nightly sleep to balance daily toil."

"This all-too humble soul would arrogate  
Unto itself some signalising hate  
From the supreme indifference of Fate!"

"Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?

I think myself; yet I would rather be  
My miserable self than He, than He  
Who formed such creatures to His own disgrace.

"The vilest thing must be less vile than  
Thou

From whom it had its being, God and Lord!

Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred,  
Malignant and implacable! I vow

"That not for all Thy power furled and unfurled,

For all the temples to Thy glory built,  
Would I assume the ignominious guilt  
Of having made such men in such a world."

"As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign,  
At once so wicked, foolish, and insane,  
As to produce men when He might refrain!

"The world rolls round for ever like a mill;  
It grinds out death and life and good and ill;

It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.

"While air of Space and Time's full river flow

The mill must blindly whirl unresting so;  
It may be wearing out, but who can know?

"Man might know one thing were his sight less dim:

That it whirrs not to suit his petty whim,  
That it is quite indifferent to him.

"Nay, does it treat him harshly as he saith?

It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath,

Then grinds him back into eternal death."

## xii

Our isolated units could be brought  
To act together for some common end?  
For one by one, each silent with his thought,

I marked a long loose line approach and wend

Athwart the great cathedral's cloistered square,

And slowly vanish from the moonlit air.

Then I would follow in among the last:  
And in the porch a shrouded figure stood,  
Who challenged each one pausing ere he passed,

With deep eyes burning through a blank white hood:

Whence come you in the world of life and light

To this our City of Tremendous Night?—

From pleading in a senate of rich lords  
For some scant justice to our countless hordes

Who toil half-starved with scarce a human right:

I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From wandering through many a solemn scene

Of opium visions, with a heart serene  
And intellect miraculously bright:

I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From making hundreds laugh and roar with glee

By my transcendent feats of mimicry,  
And humour wanton as an elfish sprite:

I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From prayer and fasting in a lonely cell,  
Which brought an ecstasy ineffable  
Of love and adoration and delight:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From ruling on a splendid kingly throne  
A nation which beneath my rule has grown  
Year after year in wealth and arts and  
might:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From preaching to an audience fired with  
faith  
The Lamb who died to save our souls from  
death,  
Whose blood hath washed our scarlet sins  
wool-white:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From drinking fiery poison in a den  
Crowded with tawdry girls and squalid  
men,  
Who hoarsely laugh and curse and brawl  
and fight:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From picturing with all beauty and all  
grace  
First Eden and the parents of our race,  
A luminous rapture unto all men's sight:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From writing a great work with patient  
plan  
To justify the ways of God to man,  
And shew how ill must fade and perish  
quite:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

From desperate fighting with a little band  
Against the powerful tyrants of our land,  
To free our brethren in their own despite:  
I wake from daydreams to this real night.

Thus, challenged by that warden sad and  
stern,  
Each one responded with his countersign,  
Then entered the cathedral; and in turn  
I entered also, having given mine:  
But lingered near until I heard no more,  
And marked the closing of the massive  
door.

## xiv

Large glooms were gathered in the mighty  
fane,  
With tinted moongleams slanting here  
and there;  
And all was hush: no swelling organ-  
strain,  
No chant, no voice or murmuring of  
prayer;  
No priests came forth, no tinkling censers  
fumed,  
And the high altar space was unillumed.

Around the pillars and against the walls  
Leaned men and shadows; others seemed  
to brood  
Bent or recumbent in secluded stalls.  
Perchance they were not a great multi-  
tude  
Save in that city of so lonely streets  
Where one may count up every face he  
meets.

All patiently awaited the event  
Without a stir or sound, as if no less  
Self-occupied, doomstricken, while atten-  
And then we heard a voice of solemn  
stress  
From the dark pulpit, and our gaze there  
met  
Two eyes which burned as never eyes  
burned yet:

Two steadfast and intolerable eyes  
Burning beneath a broad and rugged  
brow;  
The head behind it of enormous size.  
And as black fir-groves in a large wind  
bow,  
Our rooted congregation, gloom-arrayed,  
By that great sad voice deep and full were  
swayed:—

O melancholy Brothers, dark, dark, dark!  
O battling in black floods without an  
ark!  
O spectral wanderers of unholy Night!  
My soul hath bled for you these sunless  
years,  
With bitter blood-drops running down like  
tears:  
Oh, dark, dark, dark, withdrawn from  
joy and light!

My heart is sick with anguish for your  
bale;  
Your woe hath been my anguish; yea, I  
quail  
And perish in your perishing unblest.  
And I have searched the heights and  
depths, the scope  
Of all our universe, with desperate hope  
To find some solace for your wild unrest.

And now at last authentic word I bring,  
Witnessed by every dead and living thing;  
Good tidings of great joy for you, for  
all;  
There is no God; no Fiend with names  
divine  
Made us and tortures us; if we must  
pine,  
It is to satiate no Being's gall.

It was the dark delusion of a dream,  
That living Person conscious and supreme,  
Whom we must curse for cursing us with  
life;

Whom we must curse because the life He  
gave  
Could not be buried in the quiet grave,  
Could not be killed by poison or by  
knife.

This little life is all we must endure,  
The grave's most holy peace is ever sure,  
We fall asleep and never wake again;  
Nothing is of us but the mouldering flesh,  
Whose elements dissolve and merge afresh  
In earth, air, water, plants, and other  
men.

We finish thus; and all our wretched race  
Shall finish with its cycle, and give place  
To other beings, with their own time-  
doom;  
Infinite aeons ere our kind began;  
Infinite aeons after the last man  
Has joined the mammoth in earth's tomb  
and womb.

We bow down to the universal laws,  
Which never had for man a special clause  
Of cruelty or kindness, love or hate:  
If toads and vultures are obscene to sight,  
If tigers burn with beauty and with might,  
Is it by favour or by wrath of fate?

All substance lives and struggles evermore  
Through countless shapes continually at  
war,

By countless interactions interknit:  
If one is born a certain day on earth,  
All times and forces tended to that birth,  
Not all the world could change or hinder  
it.

I find no hint throughout the Universe  
Of good or ill, of blessing or of curse;  
I find alone Necessity Supreme;  
With infinite Mystery, abysmal, dark,  
Unlighted ever by the faintest spark  
For us the flitting shadows of a dream.

O Brothers of sad lives! they are so brief;  
A few short years must bring us all relief:  
Can we not bear these years of labouring  
breath?  
But if you would not this poor life fulfil,  
Lo, you are free to end it when you will,  
Without the fear of waking after death.—

The organ-like vibrations of his voice  
Thrilled through the vaulted aisles and  
died away;  
The yearning of the tones which bade  
rejoice  
Was sad and tender as a requiem lay:  
Our shadowy congregation rested still  
As brooding on that "End it when you  
will."

## xx

I sat me weary on a pillar's base,  
And leaned against the shaft; for broad  
moonlight  
O'erflowed the peacefulness of cloistered  
space,  
A shore of shadow slanting from the  
right:  
The great cathedral's western front stood  
there,  
A wave-worn rock in that calm sea of air.  
Before it, opposite my place of rest,  
Two figures faced each other, large,  
austere;  
A couchant sphinx in shadow to the breast,  
An angel standing in the moonlight  
clear;  
So mighty by magnificence of form,  
They were not dwarfed beneath that mass  
enorm.

Upon the cross-hilt of a naked sword a  
The angel's hands, as prompt to smite,  
were held;  
His vigilant, intense regard was poured  
Upon the creature placidly unquelled,  
Whose front was set at level gaze which  
took  
No heed of aught, a solemn trance-like  
look.

And as I pondered these opposed shapes  
My eyelids sank in stupor, that dull  
swoon  
Which drugs and with a leaden mantle  
drapes  
The outworn to worse weariness. But  
soon  
A sharp and clashing noise the stillness  
broke,  
And from the evil lethargy I woke.

The angel's wings had fallen, stone on  
stone,  
And lay there shattered; hence the sud-  
den sound:  
A warrior leaning on his sword alone  
Now watched the sphinx with that regard  
profound;  
The sphinx unchanged looked forthright,  
as aware  
Of nothing in the vast abyss of air.

Again I sank in that repose unsweet.  
Again a clashing noise my slumber rent;  
The warrior's sword lay broken at his  
feet:  
An unarmed man with raised hands im-  
potent  
Now stood before the sphinx, which ever  
kept  
Such mien as if with open eyes it slept.

My eyelids sank in spite of wonder grown;  
A louder crash upstartled me in dread:  
The man had fallen forward, stone on  
stone,

And lay there shattered, with his trunk-  
less head

Between the monster's large quiescent paws,  
Beneath its grand front changeless as life's  
laws.

The moon had circled westward full and  
bright,

And made the temple-front a mystic  
dream,

And bathed the whole enclosure with its  
light,

The sworded angel's wrecks, the sphinx  
supreme:

I pondered long that cold majestic face  
Whose vision seemed of infinite void  
space.

#### XXI

Anear the centre of that northern crest  
Stands out a level upland bleak and bare,  
From which the city east and south and  
west

Sinks gently in long waves; and thronèd  
there

An Image sits, stupendous, superhuman,  
The bronze colossus of a winged Woman,  
Upon a graded granite base foursquare.

Low-seated she leans forward massively,  
With cheek on clenched left hand, the  
forearm's might

Erect, its elbow on her rounded knee;

Across a clasped book in her lap the right  
Upholds a pair of compasses; she gazes  
With full set eyes, but wandering in thick  
mazes

Of sombre thought beholds no outward  
sight.

Words cannot picture her; but all men  
know

That solemn sketch the pure sad artist  
wrought

Three centuries and threescore years ago,  
With phantasies of his peculiar thought:

The instruments of carpentry and science  
Scattered about her feet, in strange alliance  
With the keen wolf-hound sleeping un-  
distracted;

Scales, hour-glass, bell, and magic-square  
above;

The grave and solid infant perched be-  
side,

With open winglets that might bear a dove,  
Intent upon its tablets, heavy-eyed;

Her folded wings as of a mighty eagle,  
But all too impotent to lift the regal

Robustness of her earth-born strength  
and pride;

And with those wings, and that light  
wreath which seems

To mock her grand head and the knotted  
frown

Of forehead charged with baleful thoughts  
and dreams,

The household bunch of keys, the house-  
wife's gown

Voluminous, indented, and yet rigid  
As if a shell of burnished metal frigid,  
The feet thick-shod to tread all weak-  
ness down;

The comet hanging o'er the waste dark  
seas,

The massy rainbow curved in front of it,  
Beyond the village with the masts and  
trees;

The snaky imp, dog-headed, from the  
Pit,

Bearing upon its batlike leathern pinions  
Her name unfolded in the sun's dominions,  
The "MELENCOlia" than transcends all  
wit.

Thus has the artist copied her, and thus  
Surrounded to expound her form sublime,  
Her fate heroic and calamitous;

Fronting the dreadful mysteries of Time,  
Unvanquished in defeat and desolation,  
Undaunted in the hopeless conflagration  
Of the day setting on her baffled prime.

Baffled and beaten back she works on still,  
Weary and sick of soul she works the  
more,

Sustained by her indomitable will:

The hands shall fashion and the brain  
shall pore,

And all her sorrow shall be turned to  
labour,

Till Death the friend-foe piercing with his  
sabre

That mighty heart of hearts ends bitter  
war.

But as if blacker night could dawn on night,  
With tenfold gloom on moonless night  
unstarred,

A sense more tragic than defeat and blight,  
More desperate than strife with hope de-  
barred,

More fatal than the adamantine Never  
Encompassing her passionate endeavour,

Dawns glooming in her tenebrous regard:

The sense that every struggle brings defeat  
Because Fate holds no prize to crown  
success;

That all the oracles are dumb or cheat  
Because they have no secret to express;

That none can pierce the vast black veil  
uncertain

Because there is no light beyond the cur-  
tain;

That all is vanity and nothingness.

Titanic from her high throne in the north,  
That City's sombre Patroness and Queen,  
In bronze sublimity she gazes forth  
Over her Capital of teen and threne,  
Over the river with its isles and bridges,  
The marsh and moorland, to the stern rock-  
ridges,

Confronting them with a coëval mien.

The moving moon and stars from east to west

Circle before her in the sea of air;  
Shadows and gleams glide round her sol-  
emn rest.

Her subjects often gaze up to her there:  
The strong to drink new strength of iron

endurance,

The weak new terrors; all, renewed assur-  
ance

And confirmation of the old despair.

#### FROM SUNDAY UP THE RIVER

[First published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1869.]

##### VI

I love this hardy exercise,  
This strenuous toil of boating:  
Our skiff beneath the willow lies  
Half stranded and half floating.

As I lie, as I lie,  
Glimpses dazzle of the blue and burn-  
ing sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie

scene.

My shirt is of the soft red wool,  
My cap is azure braided  
By two white hands so beautiful,  
My tie mauve purple-shaded.

As I lie, as I lie,  
Glimpses dazzle of white clouds and  
sapphire sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie

scene.

Your hat with long blue streamers decked,  
Your pure throat crimson-banded;  
White-robed, my own white dove unflecked,  
Dove-footed, lilac-handed.

As I lie, as I lie,  
Glimpses dazzle of white clouds and  
sapphire sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie

scene.

If any boaters boating past  
Should look where we're reclining,  
They'll say, To-day green willows glassed  
Rubies and sapphires shining!

As I lie, as I lie,  
Glimpses dazzle of the blue and burn-  
ing sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie

##### vii

Grey clouds come puffing from my lips  
And hang there softly curling,  
While from the bowl now leaps, now slips,  
A steel-blue thread high twirling.

As I lie, as I lie,  
The hours fold their wings beneath  
the sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
In that trance of perfect love and bliss

serene.

I gaze on you and I am crowned,  
A Monarch great and glorious,

A Hero in all realms renowned,  
A Faerie Prince victorious.  
As I lie, as I lie,  
The hours fold their wings beneath  
the sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
In that trance of perfect love and bliss

serene.

Your violet eyes pour out their whole  
Pure light in earnest rapture;  
Your thoughts come dreaming through my  
soul,

And nestle past recapture.

As I lie, as I lie,  
The hours fold their wings beneath  
the sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
In that trance of perfect love and bliss

serene.

O friends, your best years to the oar  
Like galley-slaves devoting,

This is and shall be evermore  
The true sublime of boating!  
As I lie, as I lie,

The hours fold their wings beneath  
the sky;  
As you lean, as you lean,  
In that trance of perfect love and bliss

serene.

##### xv

Give a man a horse he can ride,  
Give a man a boat he can sail;  
And his rank and wealth, his strength and  
health,  
On sea nor shore shall fail.

Give a man a pipe he can smoke,  
Give a man a book he can read;  
And his home is bright with a calm delight,  
Though the room be poor indeed.

Give a man a girl he can love,  
As I, O my love, love thee;  
And his heart is great with the pulse of  
Fate,  
At home, on land, on sea.

## XVII

Let my voice ring out and over the earth,  
Through all the grief and strife,  
With a golden joy in a silver mirth:  
Thank God for Life!

Let my voice swell out through the great  
abyss  
To the azure dome above,  
With a chord of faith in the harp of bliss:  
Thank God for Love!

Let my voice thrill out beneath and above,  
The whole world through;  
O my Love and Life, O my Life and Love,  
Thank God for you!

# CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

(1830-1894)

## GOBLIN MARKET

[1862.]

MORNING and evening  
Maids heard the goblins cry:  
'Come buy our orchard fruits,  
Come buy, come buy:  
Apples and quinces,  
Lemons and oranges,  
Plump unpecked cherries,  
Melons and raspberries,  
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,  
Swart-headed mulberries,  
Wild free-born cranberries,  
Crab-apples, dewberries,  
Pine-apples, blackberries,  
Apricots, strawberries;—  
All ripe together  
In summer weather,—  
Morns that pass by,  
Fair eyes that fly;  
Come buy, come buy:  
Our grapes fresh from the vine,  
Pomegranates full and fine,  
Dates and sharp bullaces,  
Rare pears and greengages,  
Damsons and bilberries,  
Taste them and try:  
Currants and gooseberries,  
Bright-fire-like barberries,  
Figs to fill your mouth,  
Citrons from the South,  
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;  
Come buy, come buy.'

Evening by evening  
Among the brookside rushes,  
Laura bowed her head to hear,  
Lizzie veiled her blushes:  
Crouching close together  
In the cooling weather,  
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,  
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.  
'Lie close,' Laura said,  
Pricking up her golden head:  
'We must not look at goblin men,  
We must not buy their fruits:  
Who knows upon what soil they fed  
Their hungry thirsty roots?'  
'Come buy,' call the goblins  
Hobbling down the glen.  
'Oh,' cried Lizzie, 'Laura, Laura,  
You should not peep at goblin men.  
Lizzie covered up her eyes,

Covered close lest they should look;  
Laura reared her glossy head,  
And whispered like the restless brook:  
'Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,  
Down the glen tramp little men.  
One hauls a basket,  
One bears a plate,  
One lugs a golden dish  
Of many pounds weight.  
How fair the vine must grow  
Whose grapes are so luscious;  
How warm the wind must blow  
Through those fruit bushes.'  
'No,' said Lizzie: 'No, no, no;  
Their offers should not charm us,  
Their evil gifts would harm us.'  
She thrust a dimpled finger  
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:  
Curious Laura chose to linger  
Wondering at each merchant man.  
One had a cat's face,  
One whisked a tail,  
One tramped at a rat's pace,  
One crawled like a snail,  
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and  
furry,  
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.  
She heard a voice like voice of doves  
Cooining all together:  
They sounded kind and full of loves  
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck  
Like a rush-imbedded swan,  
Like a lily from the beck,  
Like a moonlit poplar branch,  
Like a vessel at the launch  
When its' last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen  
Turned and trooped the goblin men,  
With their shrill repeated cry,  
'Come buy, come buy.'  
When they reached where Laura was  
They stood stock still upon the moss,  
Leering at each other,  
Brother with queer brother;  
Signalling each other,  
Brother with sly brother.  
One set his basket down,  
One reared his plate;  
One began to weave a crown  
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown  
(Men sell not such in any town);

One heaved the golden weight  
Of dish and fruit to offer her:  
'Come buy, come buy,' was still their cry.  
Laura stared but did not stir,  
Longed but had no money:  
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste  
In tones as smooth as honey,  
The cat-faced purr'd,  
The rat-paced spoke a word  
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was  
heard;  
One parrot-voiced and jolly  
Cried 'Pretty Goblin' still for 'Pretty  
Polly,' —  
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:  
'Good folk, I have no coin;  
To take were to purloin:  
I have no copper in my purse,  
I have no silver either,  
And all my gold is on the furze  
That shakes in windy weather  
Above the rusty heather.'  
'You have much gold upon your head,'  
They answered all together:  
'Buy from us with a golden curl.'  
She clipped a precious golden lock,  
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,  
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:  
Sweeter than honey from the rock,  
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,  
Clearer than water flowed that juice;  
She never tasted such before,  
How should it cloy with length of use?  
She sucked and sucked and sucked the  
more  
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;  
She sucked until her lips were sore;  
Then flung the emptied rinds away  
But gathered up one kernel stone,  
And knew not was it night or day  
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate  
Full of wise upbraidings:  
'Dear, you should not stay so late,  
Twilight is not good for maidens;  
Should not loiter in the glen  
In the haunts of goblin men.  
Do you not remember Jeanie,  
How she met them in the moonlight,  
Took their gifts both choice and many,  
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers  
Plucked from bowers  
Where summer ripens at all hours?  
But ever in the moonlight  
She pined and pined away;  
Sought them by night and day,  
Found them no more but dwindled and  
grew grey;  
Then fell with the first snow,  
While to this day no grass will grow  
Where she lies low:

I planted daisies there a year ago  
That never blow.  
You should not loiter so.  
'Nay, hush,' said Laura:  
'Nay, hush, my sister:  
I ate and ate my fill,  
Yet my mouth waters still;  
To-morrow night I will  
Buy more:' and kissed her:  
'Have done with sorrow;  
I'll bring you plums to-morrow  
Fresh on their mother twigs,  
Cherries worth getting;  
You cannot think what figs  
My teeth have met in,  
What melons icy-cold  
Piled on a dish of gold  
Too huge for me to hold,  
What peaches with a velvet nap,  
Pellucid grapes without one seed:  
Odorous indeed must be the mead  
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave  
they drink  
With lilies at the brink,  
And sugar-sweet their sap.'

Golden head by golden head,  
Like two pigeons in one nest  
Folded in each other's wings,  
They lay down in their curtained bed:  
Like two blossoms on one stem,  
Like two flakes of new-falln' snow,  
Like two wands of ivory  
Tipped with gold for awful kings.  
Moon and stars gazed in at them,  
Wind sang to them lullaby,  
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,  
Not a bat flapped to and fro  
Round their nest:  
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast  
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning  
When the first cock crowed his warning,  
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,  
Laura rose with Lizzie:  
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,  
Aired and set to rights the house,  
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,  
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,  
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,  
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;  
Talked as modest maidens should:  
Lizzie with an open heart,  
Laura in an absent dream,  
One content, one sick in part;  
One warbling for the mere bright day's  
delight,  
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:  
They went with pitchers to the ready brook;  
Lizzie most placid in her look,  
Laura most like a leaping flame.

They drew the gurgling water from its deep;  
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,  
Then turning homewards said: 'The sunset flushes  
Those furthest loftiest crags;  
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags,  
No wilful squirrel wags,  
The beasts and birds are fast asleep.'  
But Laura loitered still among the rushes  
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,  
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill:  
Listening ever, but not catching  
The customary cry,  
'Come buy, come buy,'  
With its iterated jingle  
Of sugar-baited words:  
Not for all her watching  
Once discerning even one goblin  
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;  
Let alone the herds  
That used to tramp along the glen,  
In groups or single,  
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, 'O Laura, come;  
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:  
You should not loiter longer at this brook:  
Come with me home.  
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,  
Each glowworm winks her spark,  
Let us get home before the night grows dark:

For clouds may gather  
Though this is summer weather,  
Put out the lights and drench us through;  
Then if we lost our way what should we do?'

Laura turned cold as stone  
To find her sister heard that cry alone,  
That goblin cry,  
'Come buy our fruits, come buy.'  
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?  
Must she no more such succous pasture find,  
Gone deaf and blind?  
Her tree of life drooped from the root:  
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;  
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,  
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;  
So crept to bed, and lay  
Silent till Lizzie slept;  
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,  
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire,  
and wept  
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,  
Laura kept watch in vain  
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.  
She never caught again the goblin cry:  
'Come buy, come buy;—'  
She never spied the goblin men  
Hawking their fruits along the glen:  
But when the noon waxed bright  
Her hair grew thin and grey;  
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn  
To swift decay and burn  
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone  
She set it by a wall that faced the south,  
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,  
Watched for a waxing shoot,  
But there came none;  
It never saw the sun,  
It never felt the trickling moisture run:  
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth  
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees  
False waves in desert drouth  
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,  
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,  
Tended the fowls or cows,  
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,  
Brought water from the brook,  
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook  
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear  
To watch her sister's cancerous care  
Yet not to share.  
She night and morning  
Caught the goblins' cry:  
'Come buy our orchard fruits,  
Come buy, come buy;—'  
Beside the brook, along the glen,  
She heard the tramp of goblin men,  
The voice and stir  
Poor Laura could not hear;  
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her  
But feared to pay too dear.  
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,  
Who should have been a bride;  
But who for joys brides hope to have  
Fell sick and died  
In her gay prime,  
In earliest Winter time,  
With the first glazing rime,  
With the first snow-fall of crisp Winter time.

Till Laura dwindling  
Seemed knocking at Death's door:  
Then Lizzie weighed no more  
Better and worse;  
But put a silver penny in her purse,

Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with  
clumps of furze  
At twilight, halted by the brook:  
And for the first time in her life  
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin  
When they spied her peeping:  
Came towards her hobbling,  
Flying, running, leaping,  
Puffing and blowing,  
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,  
Clucking and gobbling,  
Mopping and mowing,  
Full of airs and graces,  
Pulling wry faces,  
Demure grimaces,  
Cat-like and rat-like,  
Ratel- and wombat-like,  
Snail-paced in a hurry,  
Parrot-voiced and whistler,  
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,  
Chattering like magpies,  
Fluttering like pigeons,  
Gliding like fishes,—  
Hugged her and kissed her:  
Squeezed and caressed her:  
Stretched up their dishes,  
Panniers, and plates:  
'Look at our apples  
Russet and dun,  
Bob at our cherries,  
Bite at our peaches,  
Citrons and dates,  
Grapes for the asking,  
Pears red with basking  
Out in the sun,  
Plums on their twigs;  
Pluck them and suck them,  
Pomegranates, figs.'—

'Good folk,' said Lizzie,  
Mindful of Jeanie:  
'Give me much and many:'—  
Held out her apron,  
Tossed them her penny.  
'Nay, take a seat with us,  
Honour and eat with us,'  
They answered grinning:  
'Our feast is but beginning.  
Night yet is early,  
Warm and dew-pearly,  
Wakeful and starry:  
Such fruits as these  
No man can carry;  
Half their bloom would fly,  
Half their dew would dry,  
Half their flavour would pass by.  
Sit down and feast with us,  
Be welcome guest with us,  
Cheer you, and rest with us.'—  
'Thank you,' said Lizzie: 'But one waits  
At home alone for me:  
So without further parleying,

If you will not sell me any  
Of your fruits though much and many,  
Give me back my silver penny  
I tossed you for a fee.'—  
They began to scratch their pates,  
No longer wagging, purring,  
But visibly demurring,  
Grunting and snarling.  
One called her proud,  
Cross-grained, uncivil;  
Their tones waxed loud,  
Their looks were evil.  
Lashing their tails  
They trod and hustled her,  
Elbowed and jostled her,  
Clawed with their nails,  
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,  
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,  
Twitched her hair out by the roots,  
Stamped upon her tender feet,  
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits  
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,  
Like a lily in a flood,—  
Like a rock of blue-veined stone  
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—  
Like a beacon left alone  
In a hoary roaring sea,  
Sending up a golden fire,—  
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree  
White with blossoms honey-sweet  
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—  
Like a royal virgin town  
Topped with gilded dome and spire  
Close beleaguered by a fleet  
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,  
Twenty cannot make him drink.  
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,  
Coaxed and fought her,  
Bullied and besought her,  
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,  
Kicked and knocked her,  
Mauled and mocked her,  
Lizzie uttered not a word;  
Would not open lip from lip  
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:  
But laughed in heart to feel the drip  
Of juice that syrupped all her face,  
And lodged in dimples of her chin,  
And streaked her neck which quaked like  
curd.  
At last the evil people  
Worn out by her resistance  
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit  
Along whichever road they took,  
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;  
Some writhed into the ground,  
Some dived into the brook  
With ring and ripple,  
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,  
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,  
Lizzie went her way;  
Knew not was it night or day;  
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,  
Threaded copse and dingle,  
And heard her penny jingle  
Bouncing in her purse,—  
Its bounce was music to her ear.  
She ran and ran  
As if she feared some goblin man  
Dogged her with gibe or curse  
Or something worse:  
But not one goblin skurried after,  
Nor was she pricked by fear;  
The kind heart made her windy-paced  
That urged her home quite out of breath  
with haste  
And inward laughter.

She cried 'Laura,' up the garden,  
'Did you miss me?  
Come and kiss me.  
Never mind my bruises,  
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices  
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,  
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.  
Eat me, drink me, love me;  
Laura, make much of me:  
For your sake I have braved the glen  
And had to do with goblin merchant men.'

Laura started from her chair,  
Flung her arms up in the air,  
Clutched her hair:  
'Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted  
For my sake the fruit forbidden?  
Must your light like mine be hidden,  
Your young life like mine be wasted,  
Undone in mine undoing  
And ruined in my ruin,  
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?'—  
She clung about her sister,  
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:  
Tears once again  
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,  
Dropping like rain  
After long sultry drouth;  
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,  
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry  
mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,  
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,  
She loathed the feast:  
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and  
sung,  
Rent all her robe, and wrung  
Her hands in lamentable haste,  
And beat her breast.  
Her locks streamed like the torch  
Borne by a racer at full speed,  
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,  
Or like an eagle when she stems the light

Straight toward the sun,  
Or like a caged thing freed,  
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins,  
knocked at her heart,  
Met the fire smouldering there  
And overbore its lesser flame;  
She gorged on bitterness without a name:  
Ah! fool, to choose such part  
Of soul-consuming care!  
Sense failed in the mortal strife:  
Like the watch-tower of a town  
Which an earthquake shatters down,  
Like a lightning-stricken mast,  
Like a wind-uprooted tree  
Spun about,  
Like a foam-topped waterspout  
Cast down headlong in the sea,  
She fell at last;  
Pleasure past and anguish past,  
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.  
That night long Lizzie watched by her,  
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,  
Felt for her breath,  
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face  
With tears and fanning leaves:  
But when the first birds chirped about their  
eaves,  
And early reapers plodded to the place  
Of golden sheaves,  
And dew-wet grass  
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to  
pass,  
And new buds with new day  
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,  
Laura awoke as from a dream,  
Laughed in the innocent old way,  
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;  
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread  
of grey,  
Her breath was sweet as May  
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years  
Afterwards, when both were wives  
With children of their own:  
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,  
Their lives bound up in tender lives;  
Laura would call the little ones  
And tell them of her early prime,  
Those pleasant days long gone  
Of not-returning time:  
Would talk about the haunted glen,  
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,  
Their fruits like honey to the throat  
But poisons in the blood;  
(Men sell not such in any town:)  
Would tell them how her sister stood  
In deadly peril to do her good,  
And win the fiery antidote:  
Then joining hands to little hands

Would bid them cling together,  
For there is no friend like a sister  
In calm or stormy weather;  
To cheer one on the tedious way,  
To fetch one if one goes astray,  
To lift one if one totters down,  
To strengthen whilst one stands.'

## VANITY OF VANITIES

[Published 1847. — Reprinted 1862.]

AH, woe is me for pleasure that is vain,  
Ah, woe is me for glory that is past:  
Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,  
Glory that at the last bringeth no gain!  
So saith the sinking heart; and so again  
It shall say till the mighty angel-blast  
Is blown, making the sun and moon  
aghast  
And showering down the stars like sudden  
rain.  
And evermore men shall go fearfully  
Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;  
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,  
And strong men shall rise up in weariness;  
Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly  
Saying one to another: How vain it is!

## DREAM LAND

[Published 1850. — Reprinted 1862.]

WHERE sunless rivers weep  
Their waves into the deep,  
She sleeps a charmed sleep:  
Awake her not.  
Led by a single star,  
She came from very far  
To seek where shadows are  
Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,  
She left the fields of corn,  
For twilight cold and lorn  
And water springs.  
Through sleep, as through a veil,  
She sees the sky look pale,  
And hears the nightingale  
That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest  
Shed over brow and breast;  
Her face is toward the west,  
The purple land.  
She cannot see the grain  
Ripening on hill and plain;  
She cannot feel the rain  
Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore  
Upon a mossy shore;  
Rest, rest at the heart's core  
Till time shall cease;

Sleep that no pain shall wake,  
Night that no morn shall break  
Till joy shall overtake  
Her perfect peace.

## UP-HILL

[Published 1861. — Reprinted 1862.]

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?  
Yes, to the very end.  
Will the day's journey take the whole long  
day?  
From morn to night, my friend.  
But is there for the night a resting-place?  
A roof for when the slow dark hours  
begin.  
May not the darkness hide it from my  
face?  
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?  
Those who have gone before.  
Then must I knock, or call when just in  
sight?  
They will not keep you standing at that  
door.  
Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?  
Of labour you shall find the sum.  
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?  
Yea, beds for all who come.

## A BIRTHDAY

[Published 1861. — Reprinted 1862.]

My heart is like a singing bird  
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;  
My heart is like an apple-tree  
Whose boughs are bent with thickset  
fruit;  
My heart is like a rainbow shell  
That paddles in a halcyon sea;  
My heart is gladder than all these  
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;  
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;  
Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,  
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;  
Work it in gold and silver grapes,  
In leaves, and silver fleurs-de-lys;  
Because the birthday of my life  
Is come, my love is come to me.

## REMEMBER

[1862.]

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,  
Gone far away into the silent land;  
When you can no more hold me by the  
hand,  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day

You tell me of our future that you planned:  
Only remember me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

## AFTER DEATH

[1862.]

THE curtains were half drawn, the floor  
was swept  
And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may  
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,  
Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.  
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept  
And could not hear him; but I heard him say:  
'Poor child, poor child'; and as he turned away  
Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.  
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold  
That hid my face, or take my hand in his,  
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:  
He did not love me living; but once dead  
He pitied me; and very sweet it is  
To know he still is warm though I am cold.

## MIRAGE

[1862.]

THE hope I dreamed of was a dream,  
Was but a dream; and now I wake  
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,  
For a dream's sake.  
I hang my harp upon a tree,  
A weeping willow in a lake;  
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt  
For a dream's sake.  
Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;  
My silent heart, lie still and break:  
Life, and the world, and mine own self,  
are changed  
For a dream's sake.

## SONG

[1862.]

WHEN I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree:

Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember  
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,  
I shall not feel the rain;  
I shall not hear the nightingale  
Sing on, as if in pain:  
And dreaming through the twilight  
That doth not rise nor set,  
Haply I may remember,  
And haply may forget.

## DEAD BEFORE DEATH

[1862.]

AH! changed and cold, how changed and very cold,  
With stiffened smiling lips and cold calm eyes:  
Changed, yet the same; much knowing, little wise;  
*This was the promise of the days of old!*  
Grown hard and stubborn in the ancient mould,  
Grown rigid in the sham of lifelong lies:  
We hoped for better things as years would rise,  
But it is over as a tale once told.  
All fallen the blossom that no fruitage bore,  
All lost the present and the future time,  
All lost, all lost, the lapse that went before:  
So lost till death shut-to the opened door,  
So lost from chime to everlasting chime,  
So cold and lost for ever evermore.

## REST

[1862.]

O EARTH, lie heavily upon her eyes;  
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;  
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth  
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.  
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,  
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth  
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;  
With stillness that is almost Paradise.  
Darkness more clear than noon-day holdeth her,  
Silence more musical than any song;  
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:  
Until the morning of Eternity  
Her rest shalt not begin nor end, but be;  
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

## A BETTER RESURRECTION

[1862.]

I HAVE no wit, no words, no tears;  
 My heart within me like a stone  
 Is numbed too much for hopes or fears;  
 Look right, look left, I dwell alone;  
 I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief  
   No everlasting hills I see;  
 My life is in the falling leaf:  
   O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,  
 My harvest dwindle to a husk;  
 Truly my life is void and brief  
   And tedious in the barren dusk:  
 My life is like a frozen thing,  
   No bud nor greenness can I see:  
 Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;  
   O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,  
 A broken bowl that cannot hold  
 One drop of water for my soul  
   Or cordial in the searching cold;  
 Cast in the fire the perished thing,  
   Melt and remould it, till it be  
 A royal cup for Him my King:  
   O Jesus, drink of me.

## ADVENT

[1862.]

THIS Advent moon shines cold and clear,  
 These Advent nights are long;  
 Our lamps have burned year after year  
   And still their flame is strong.  
 'Watchman, what of the night?' we cry,  
   Heart-sick with hope deferred:  
 'No speaking signs are in the sky,'  
   Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,  
 The servants watch within;  
 The watch is long betimes and late,  
   The prize is slow to win.  
 'Watchman, what of the night?' But still  
   His answer sounds the same:  
 'No daybreak tops the utmost hill,  
   Nor pale our lamps of flame.'

One to another hear them speak  
 The patient virgins wise:  
 'Surely He is not far to seek'—  
   'All night we watch and rise.'  
 'The days are evil looking back,  
   The coming days are dim;  
 Yet count we not His promise slack,  
   But watch and wait for Him.'

One with another, soul with soul,  
   They kindle fire from fire:  
 'Friends watch us who have touched the  
   goal'  
   'They urge us, come up higher.'

'With them shall rest our waysore feet,  
 With them is built our home,  
 With Christ.'—'They sweet, but He most  
   sweet,  
   Sweeter than honeycomb.'

There no more parting, no more pain,  
 The distant ones brought near,  
 The lost so long are found again,  
   Long lost but longer dear:  
 Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,  
   Nor heart conceived that rest,  
 With them our good things long deferred,  
   With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,  
 We laugh for day shall rise,  
 We sing a slow contented song  
   And knock at Paradise.  
 Weeping we hold Him fast, Who wept  
   For us, we hold Him fast;  
 And will not let Him go except  
   He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;  
 We will not let Him go  
 Till daybreak smite our wearied sight  
   And summer smite the snow:  
 Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove  
   Shall coo the livelong day;  
 Then He shall say, 'Arise, My love,  
   My fair one, come away.'

## THE THREE ENEMIES

[1862.]

## THE FLESH

'Sweet, thou art pale.'  
   'More pale to see  
 Christ hung upon the cruel tree  
 And bore His Father's wrath for me.'  
 'Sweet, thou art sad.'

'Beneath a rod  
 More heavy, Christ for my sake trod  
 The winepress of the wrath of God.'  
 'Sweet, thou art weary.'

'Not so Christ:  
 Whose mighty love of me sufficed  
 For Strength, Salvation, Eucharist.'

'Sweet, thou art footsore.'  
   'If I bleed,  
 His feet have bled: yea, in my need  
 His Heart once bled for mine indeed.'

## THE WORLD

'Sweet, thou art young.'  
   'So He was young  
 Who for my sake in silence hung  
 Upon the Cross with Passion wrung.'

'Look, thou art fair.'  
   'He was more fair  
 Than men, Who deigned for me to wear  
 A visage marred beyond compare.'

'And thou hast riches.'

'Daily bread:

All else is His; Who living, dead,  
For me lacked where to lay His Head.'

'And life is sweet.'

'It was not so

To Him, Whose Cup did overflow  
With mine unutterable woe.'

#### THE DEVIL

'Thou drinkest deep.'

'When Christ would sup

He drained the dregs from out my cup:  
So how should I be lifted up?'

'Thou shalt win Glory.'

'In the skies,

Lord Jesus, cover up mine eyes  
Lest they should look on vanities.'

'Thou shalt have Knowledge.'

'Helpless dust!

In Thee, O Lord, I put my trust:  
Answer Thou for me, Wise and Just.'

'And Might.'

'Get thee behind me, Lord,

Who hast redeemed and not abhorred  
My soul, oh keep it by Thy Word.'

#### THE WORLD

[1862.]

By day she woos me, soft, exceeding fair:  
But all night as the moon so changeth  
she;

Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy  
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.

By day she woos me to the outer air,  
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full  
satiety:

But through the night, a beast she grins  
at me,

A very monster void of love and prayer.  
By day she stands a lie: by night she  
stands

In all the naked horror of the truth  
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.

Is this a friend indeed; that I should sell  
My soul to her, give her my life and  
youth,  
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?

#### PASSING AWAY, SAITH THE WORLD

[1862.]

PASSING away, saith the World, passing  
away:

Chances, beauty and youth sapped day by  
day:

Thy life never continueth in one stay.

Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair  
changing to grey

That hath won neither laurel nor bay?  
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in  
May:

Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy  
decay

On my bosom for aye.

Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:  
With its burden of fear and hope, of  
labour and play;

Hearken what the past doth witness and  
say:

Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,  
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must  
decay.

At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one  
certain day

Lo, the Bridegroom shall come and shall  
not delay:

Watch thou and pray.

Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:  
Winter passeth after the long delay:  
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the  
tender spray,

Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.  
Though I tarry wait for me, trust Me,

watch and pray.

Arise, come away, night is past and lo it  
is day,

My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt  
hear Me say.

Then I answered: Yea.

#### A PORTRAIT

[1866.]

I

SHE gave up beauty in her tender youth,  
Gave all her hope and joy and pleasant  
ways;

She covered up her eyes lest they should  
gaze

On vanity, and chose the bitter truth.  
Harsh towards herself, towards others full  
of ruth,

Servant of servants, little known to  
praise,

Long prayers and fasts trenched on her  
nights and days:

She schooled herself to sights and sounds  
uncouth

That with the poor and stricken she might  
make

A home, until the least of all sufficed  
Her wants; her own self learned she to  
forsake,

Counting all earthly gain but hurt and loss.  
So with calm will she chose and bore the  
cross

And hated all for love of Jesus Christ.

## II

They knelt in silent anguish by her bed,  
And could not weep; but calmly there  
she lay.

All pain had left her; and the sun's  
last ray

Shone through upon her, warming into red  
The shady curtains. In her heart she said:

'Heaven opens; I leave these and go  
away;

The Bridegroom calls,—shall the Bride  
seek to stay?'

Then low upon her breast she bowed her  
head.

O lily flower, O gem of priceless worth,  
O dove with patient voice and patient  
eyes,

O fruitful vine amid a land of dearth,  
O maid replete with loving purities,  
Thou bowest down thy head with friends  
on earth

To raise it with the saints in Paradise.

## TWICE

[1866.]

I TOOK my heart in my hand  
(O my love, O my love),  
I said: Let me fall or stand,  
Let me live or die,  
But this once hear me speak—  
(O my love, O my love)—  
Yet a woman's words are weak;  
You should speak, not I.

You took my heart in your hand  
With a friendly smile,  
With a critical eye you scanned,  
Then set it down,  
And said: It is still unripe,  
Better wait awhile;  
Wait while the skylarks pipe,  
Till the corn grows brown.

As you set it down it broke—  
Broke, but I did not wince;  
I smiled at the speech you spoke,  
At your judgment that I heard:  
But I have not often smiled  
Since then, nor questioned since,  
Nor cared for corn-flowers wild,  
—Nor sung with the singing bird.

I take my heart in my hand,  
O my God, O my God,  
My broken heart in my hand:  
Thou hast seen, judge Thou.  
My hope was written on sand,  
O my God, O my God:  
Now let Thy judgment stand—  
Yea, judge me now.

This contemned of a man,  
This marred one heedless day,  
This heart take Thou to scan  
Both within and without:  
Refine with fire its gold,  
Purge Thou its dross away—  
Yea, hold it in Thy hold,  
Whence none can pluck it out.

I take my heart in my hand—  
I shall not die, but live—  
Before Thy face I stand;  
I, for Thou callest such:  
All that I have I bring,  
All that I am I give,  
Smile Thou and I shall sing,  
But shall not question much.

L. E. L.

[1866.]

'Whose heart was breaking for a little love.'

DOWNSTAIRS I laugh, I sport and jest with  
all:  
But in my solitary room above  
I turn my face in silence to the wall;  
My heart is breaking for a little love.  
Though winter frosts are done,  
And birds pair every one,  
And leaves peep out, for springtide is  
begun.

I feel no spring, while spring is wellnigh  
blown,  
I find no nest, while nests are in the  
grove:  
Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells  
alone,  
My heart that breaketh for a little love.  
While golden in the sun  
Rivulets rise and run,  
While lilies bud, for springtide is begun.

All love, are loved, save only I; their  
hearts  
Beat warm with love and joy, beat full  
thereof:  
They cannot guess, who play the pleasant  
parts,  
My heart is breaking for a little love.  
While beehives wake and whirr,  
And rabbit thins his fur,

In living spring that sets the world astir.

I deck myself with silks and jewelry,  
I plume myself like any mated dove:  
They praise my rustling show, and never  
see  
My heart is breaking for a little love.  
While sprouts green lavender  
With rosemary and myrrh,  
For in quick spring the sap is all astir.

Perhaps some saints in glory guess the truth,  
Perhaps some angels read it as they move,  
And cry one to another full of ruth,  
'Her heart is breaking for a little love.'  
Though other things have birth,  
And leap and sing for mirth,  
When springtime wakes and clothes and feeds the earth.

Yet saith a saint: 'Take patience for thy scathe;'  
Yet saith an angel: 'Wait, for thou shalt prove  
True best is last, true life is born of death,  
O thou, heart-broken for a little love.  
Then love shall fill thy girth,  
And love make fat thy dearth,  
When new spring builds new heaven and clean new earth.'

## SOMEWHERE OR OTHER

[1866.]

SOMEWHERE or other there must surely be  
The face not seen, the voice not heard,  
The heart that not yet—never yet—ah me!  
Made answer to my word.

Somewhere or other, may be near or far;  
Past land and sea, clean out of sight;  
Beyond the wandering moon, beyond the star  
That tracks her night by night.

Somewhere or other, may be far or near;  
With just a wall, a hedge, between;  
With just the last leaves of the dying year  
Fallen on a turf grown green.

## WEARY IN WELL-DOING

[1866.]

I WOULD have gone; God bade me stay:  
I would have worked; God bade me rest.  
He broke my will from day to day,  
He read my yearnings unexpressed  
And said them nay.

Now I would stay; God bids me go:  
Now I would rest; God bids me work.  
He breaks my heart tossed to and fro,  
My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk  
And vex it so.

I go, Lord, where Thou sendest me;  
Day after day I plod and moil:  
But, Christ my God, when will it be  
That I may let alone my toil  
And rest with Thee?

## PARADISE: IN A DREAM

[Published in *Lyra Messianica*, second edition, 1865.]

ONCE in a dream I saw the flowers  
That bud and bloom in Paradise;  
More fair they are than waking eyes  
Have seen in all this world of ours.  
And faint the perfume-bearing rose,  
And faint the lily on its stem,  
And faint the perfect violet  
Compared with them.

I heard the songs of Paradise:  
Each bird sat singing in his place;  
A tender song so full of grace  
It soared like incense to the skies.  
Each bird sat singing to his mate  
Soft cooing notes among the trees:  
The nightingale herself were cold  
To such as these.

I saw the fourfold River flow,  
And deep it was, with golden sand;  
It flowed between a mossy land  
Which murmured music grave and low.  
It hath refreshment for all thirst,  
For fainting spirits strength and rest;  
Earth holds not such a draught as this  
From east to west.

The Tree of Life stood budding there,  
Abundant with its twelvefold fruits;  
Eternal sap sustains its roots,  
Its shadowing branches fill the air.  
Its leaves are healing for the world,  
Its fruit the hungry world can feed.  
Sweeter than honey to the taste  
And balm indeed.

I saw the gate called Beautiful;  
And looked, but scarce could look,  
within;  
I saw the golden streets begin,  
And outskirts of the glassy pool.  
Oh harps, oh crowns of plenteous stars,  
Oh green palm-branches many-leaved—  
Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,  
Nor heart conceived.

I hope to see these things again,  
But not as once in dreams by night;  
To see them with my very sight,  
And touch, and handle, and attain:  
To have all Heaven beneath my feet  
For narrow way that once they trod;  
To have my part with all the Saints,  
And with my God.

## AMOR MUNDI

[Published in *The Shilling Magazine*, 1865.]

OH, where are you going with your love-locks flowing,  
On the west wind blowing along this valley track?"

'The downhill path is easy, come with me  
an' it please ye,  
We shall escape the uphill by never turning  
back.'

So they two went together in glowing Au-  
gust weather,

The honey-breathing heather lay to their  
left and right;

And dear she was to doat on, her swift  
feet seemed to float on

The air like soft twin pigeons too  
sportive to alight.

'Oh, what is that in heaven where grey  
cloudflakes are seven,

Where blackest clouds hang riven just at  
the rainy skirt?'

'Oh, that's a meteor sent us, a message  
dumb, portentous,—

An undecipher'd solemn signal of help or  
hurt.'

'Oh, what is that glides quickly where vel-  
vet flowers grow thickly,

Their scent comes rich and sickly?'—'A  
scaled and hooded worm.'

'Oh, what's that in the hollow, so pale I  
quake to follow?'

'Oh, that's a thin dead body which waits  
th' eternal term.'

'Turn again, O my sweetest,—turn again,  
false and fleetest:

This way whereof thou weetest I fear is  
hell's own track.'

'Nay, too steep for hill-mounting,—nay,  
too late for cost counting:

This downhill path is easy, but there's no  
turning back.'

#### THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY

[Published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, March 1869.]

I WOULD not if I could undo my past,

Tho' for its sake my future is a blank;

My past, for which I have myself to  
thank

For all its faults and follies first and last.

I would not cast anew the lot once cast,

Or launch a second ship for one that  
sank,

Or drug with sweets the bitterness I  
drank,

Or break by feasting my perpetual fast.  
I would not if I could: for much more  
dear

Is one remembrance than a hundred joys,  
More than a thousand hopes in jubilee;

Dearer the music of one tearful voice  
That unforgotten calls and calls to me,

'Follow me here, rise up, and follow here.'

What seekest thou far in the unknown  
land?

In hope I follow joy gone on before,  
In hope and fear persistent more and  
more,

As the dry desert lengthens out its sand.  
Whilst day and night I carry in my hand  
The golden key to ope the golden door  
Of golden home; yet mine eye weepeth  
sore

For the long journey that must make no  
stand.

And who is this that veiled doth walk  
with thee?

Lo, this is Love that walketh at my  
right;

One exile holds us both, and we are  
bound

To selfsame home-joys in the land of  
light.

Weeping thou walkest with him; weepeth  
he? —

Some sobbing weep, some weep and  
make no sound

A dimness of a glory glimmers here  
Thro' veils and distance from the space  
remote,

A faintest far vibration of a note  
Reaches to us and seems to bring us near,  
Causing our face to glow with braver  
cheer,

Making the serried mist to stand afloat,  
Subduing languor with an antidote,  
And strengthening love almost to cast out  
fear,

Till for one moment golden city walls  
Rise looming on us, golden walls of  
home,

Light of our eyes until the darkness falls;  
Then thro' the outer darkness burden-  
some

I hear again the tender voice that calls,  
'Follow me hither, follow, rise, and come.'

# DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

(1828-1882)

## THE BLESSED DAMOZEL<sup>1</sup>

[Composed 1847.—Published 1850.]

THE blessed damozel leaned out  
From the gold bar of Heaven;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
Of waters stilled at even;  
She had three lilies in her hand,  
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,  
No wrought flowers did adorn,  
But a white rose of Mary's gift,  
For service meetly worn;  
Her hair that lay along her back  
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Her seemed she scarce had been a day  
One of God's choristers;  
The wonder was not yet quite gone  
From that still look of hers;  
Albeit, to them she left, her day  
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.  
. . . Yet now, and in this place,  
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair  
Fell all about my face. . . .  
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.  
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house  
That she was standing on;  
By God built over the sheer depth  
The which is Space begun;  
So high, that looking downward thence  
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge.  
Beneath, the tides of day and night  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met  
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,  
Spoke evermore among themselves  
Their heart-remembered names;  
And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames.

<sup>1</sup> The order of the poems is that of the Collected Works, 1886, except that the King's Tragedy has been placed last. The dates are from W. M. Rossetti's chronology, prefixed to the edition of 1911.

And still she bowed herself and stooped  
Out of the circling charm;  
Until her bosom must have made  
The bar she leaned on warm,  
And the lilies lay as if asleep  
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
Time like a pulse shake fierce  
Through all the world. Her gaze still strove  
Within the gulf to pierce  
Its path; and now she spoke as when  
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon  
Was like a little feather  
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now  
She spoke through the still weather.  
Her voice was like the voice the stars  
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,  
Strove not her accents there,  
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells  
Possessed the mid-day air,  
Strove not her steps to reach my side  
Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,  
For he will come,' she said.  
'Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,  
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?  
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?  
And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,  
And he is clothed in white,  
I'll take his hand and go with him  
To the deep wells of light;  
As unto a stream we will step down,  
And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,  
Occult, withheld, untrod,  
Whose lamps are stirred continually  
With prayer sent up to God;  
And see our old prayers, granted, melt  
Each like a little cloud.

'We two will lie i' the shadow of  
That living mystic tree  
Within whose secret growth the Dove  
Is sometimes felt to be,  
While every leaf that His plumes touch  
Saith His Name audibly.'

'And I myself will teach to him,  
I myself, lying so,  
The songs I sing here; which his voice  
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,  
And find some knowledge at each pause,  
Or some new thing to know.'

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!  
Yea, one wast thou with me  
That once of old. But shall God lift  
To endless unity  
The soul whose likeness with thy soul  
Was but its love for thee?)

'We two,' she said, 'will seek the groves  
Where the lady Mary is,  
With her five handmaids, whose names  
Are five sweet symphonies,  
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,  
Margaret and Rosalys.

'Circlewise sit they, with bound locks  
And foreheads garlanded;  
Into the fine cloth white like flame  
Weaving the golden thread,  
To fashion the birth-robes for them  
Who are just born, being dead.

'He shall fear, haply, and be dumb;  
Then will I lay my cheek -  
To his, and tell about our love,  
Not once abashed or weak:  
And the dear Mother will approve  
My pride, and let me speak.

'Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,  
To Him round whom all souls  
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads  
Bowed with their aureoles:  
And angels meeting us shall sing  
To their citherns and citoles.

'There will I ask of Christ the Lord  
Thus much for him and me:—  
Only to live as once on earth  
With Love, only to be,  
As then awhile, for ever now  
Together, I and he.'

She gazed and listened and then said,  
Less sad of speech than mild,—  
'All this is when he comes.' She ceased.  
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd  
With angels in strong level flight.  
, Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path  
Was vague in distant spheres:  
And then she cast her arms along  
The golden barriers,  
And laid her face between her hands,  
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

## LOVE'S NOCTURN

[Composed 1854. — Published 1870.]

MASTER of the murmuring courts  
Where the shapes of sleep convene! —  
Lo! my spirit here exhorts  
All the powers of thy demesne  
For their aid to woo my queen.  
What reports

Yield thy jealous courts unseen?

Vaporous, unaccountable, *both Latin.*  
Dreamland lies forlorn of light, *All these*  
Hollow like a breathing shell.  
Ah! that from all dreams I might  
Choose one dream and guide its flight!

I know well

What her sleep should tell to-night.

There the dreams are multitudes:  
Some that will not wait for sleep,  
Deep within the August woods;  
Some that hum while rest may steep  
Weary labor laid a-heap;  
Interludes,  
Some, of grievous moods that weep.

Poet's fancies all are there;  
There the elf-girls flood with wings  
Valleys full of plaintive air;  
There breathe perfumes; there in rings  
Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;  
Siren there  
Winds her dizzy hair and sings.

Thence the one dream mutually  
Dreamed in bridal unison,  
Less than walking ecstasy;  
Half-formed visions that make moan  
In the house-of birth alone;  
And what we  
At death's wicket see, unknown.

But for mine own 'sleep, it lies  
In one gracious form's control,  
Fair with honorable eyes,  
Lamps of a translucent soul:  
O their glance is loftiest dole,  
Sweet and wise,  
Wherein Love descires his goal.

Reft of her, my dreams are all  
Clammy trance that fears the sky:  
Changing footpaths shift and fall;  
From polluted coverts nigh,  
Miserable phantoms sigh;  
Quakes the pall,  
And the funeral goes by.

Master, is it soothly said  
That, as echoes of man's speech  
Far in secret clefts are made,  
So do all men's bodies reach  
Shadows o'er thy sunken beach,—  
Shape or shade  
In those halls portrayed of each?

Ah! might I, by thy good grace  
Groping in the windy stair,  
(Darkness and the breath of space  
Like loud waters everywhere),  
Meeting mine own image there  
Face to face,  
Send it from that place to her!

Nay, not I; but oh! do thou,  
Master, from thy shadow kind  
Call my body's phantom now:  
Bid it bear its face declin'd  
Till its flight her slumbers find,  
And her brow  
Feel its presence bow like wind.

Where in groves the gracile Spring  
Trembles, with mute orison  
Confidently strengthening,  
Water's voice and wind's as one  
Shed an echo in the sun.  
Soft as Spring,  
Master, bid it sing and moan.  
  
Song shall tell how glad and strong  
Is the night she soothes alway;  
Moan shall grieve with that parched tongue  
Of the brazen hours of day:  
Sounds as of the springtide they,  
Moan and song,  
While the chill months long for May.

Not the prayers which with all leave  
The world's fluent woes prefer,—  
Not the praise the world doth give,  
Dulcet fulsome whisperer;—  
Let it yield my love to her,  
And achieve  
Strength that shall not grieve or err.

Wheresoe'er my dreams befall,  
Both at night-watch (let it say),  
And where round the sun-dial  
The reluctant hours of day,  
Heartless, hopeless of their way,  
Rest and call;—  
There her glance doth fall and stay.

Suddenly her face is there:  
So do mounting vapors wreath  
Subtile-scented transports where  
The black fir-wood sets its teeth,  
Part the boughs and looks beneath,—  
Lilies share  
Secret waters there, and breathe.

Master, bid my shadow bend  
Whispering thus till birth of light,  
Lest new shapes that sleep may send  
Scatter all its work to flight;—  
Master, master of the night,  
Bid it spend  
Speech, song, prayer, and end aright.

Yet, ah me! if at her head  
There another phantom lean  
Murmuring o'er the fragrant bed,—  
Ah! and if my spirit's queen  
Smile those alien words between,—  
Ah! poor shade!  
Shall it strive, or fade unseen?

How should love's own messenger  
Strive with love and be love's foe?  
Master, nay! If thus, in her,  
Sleep a wedded heart should show,—  
Silent let mine image go,  
Its old share  
Of thy spell-bound air to know.

Like a vapor wan and mute, *monosyllabic*  
Like a flame, so let it pass; *verse, yet*  
One low sigh across her lute, *unison*  
One dull breath against her glass; *not*  
And to my sad soul, alas! *momentous*  
One salute  
Cold as when death's foot shall pass.

Then, too, let all hopes of mine,  
All vain hopes by night and day,  
Slowly at thy summoning sign  
Rise up pallid and obey.  
Dreams, if this is thus, were they:—  
Be they thine,  
And to dreamworld pine away.

Yet from old time, life, not death,  
Master, in thy rule is rife:  
Lo! through thee, with mingling breath,  
Adam woke beside his wife.  
O Love bring me so, for strife,  
Force and faith,  
Bring me so not death but life!

Yea, to Love himself is pour'd  
This frail song of hope and fear.  
Thou art Love, of one accord  
With kind Sleep to bring her near,  
Still-eyed, deep-eyed, ah how dear!  
Master, Lord,  
In her name implor'd, O hear!

#### TROY TOWN

[Composed 1869.—Published 1870.]

HEAVENBORN Helen, Sparta's queen,  
(*O Troy Town!*)  
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,  
The sun and moon of the heart's desire:  
All Love's lordship lay between.  
(*O Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Helen knelt at Venus' shrine,  
(*O Troy Town!*)  
Saying, 'A little gift is mine,  
A little gift for a heart's desire.  
Hear me speak and make me a sign!  
(*O Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'Look, I bring thee a carven cup;  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 See it here as I hold it up,—  
 Shaped it is to the heart's desire,  
 Fit to fill when the gods would sup.  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'It was moulded like my breast;  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 He that sees it may not rest,  
 Rest at all for his heart's desire.  
 O give ear to my heart's behest!  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'See my breast, how like it is;  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 See it bare for the air to kiss!  
 Is the cup to thy heart's desire?  
 O for the breast, O make it his!  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'Yea, for my bosom here I sue;  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Thou must give it where 'tis due,  
 Give it there to the heart's desire.  
 Whom do I give my bosom to?  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'Each twin breast is an apple sweet!  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Once an apple stirred the beat  
 Of thy heart with the heart's desire:—  
 Say, who brought it then to thy feet?  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'They that claimed it then were three  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 For thy sake two hearts did he  
 Make forlorn of the heart's desire.  
 Do for him as he did for thee!  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

'Mine are apples grown to the south,  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Grown to taste in the days of drouth,  
 Taste and waste to the heart's desire:  
 Mine are apples meet for his mouth!  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Venus looked on Helen's gift,  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Looked and smiled with subtle drift,  
 Saw the work of her heart's desire:—  
 'There thou kneel'st for Love to lift!'  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Venus looked in Helen's face,  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Knew far off an hour and place,  
 And fire lit from the heart's desire;  
 Laughed and said, 'Thy gift hath grace!'  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Cupid looked on Helen's breast,  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Saw the heart within its nest,  
 Saw the flame of the heart's desire,—  
 Marked his arrow's burning crest.  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Cupid took another dart,  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Fledged it for another heart,  
 Winged the shaft with the heart's desire,  
 Drew the string and said, 'Depart!'  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

Paris turned upon his bed,  
 (O *Troy Town!*)  
 Turned upon his bed and said,  
 Dead at heart with the heart's desire,—  
 'O to clasp her golden head!'  
 (O *Troy's down,*  
*Tall Troy's on fire!*)

#### THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH

[Composed 1850 and later.—Published 1856.]

IN our Museum galleries  
 To-day I lingered o'er the prize  
 Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—  
 Her Art for ever in fresh wise  
     From hour to hour rejoicing me.  
 Sighing I turned at last to win  
 Once more the London dirt and din;  
 And as I made the swing-door spin  
 And issued, they were hoisting in  
     A wingèd beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,  
 And hoofs behind and hoofs before,  
 And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er  
 'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,  
     A dead disembowelled mystery;  
 The mummy of a buried faith  
 Stark from the charnel without scathe,  
 Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—  
 Such fossil ceremonys as might swathe  
     The very corpse of Nineveh.

The print of its first rush-wrapping,  
 Wound ere it dried, still ribbed the thing.  
 What song did the brown maidens sing,  
 From purple mouths alternating,  
     When that was woven languidly?

What vows, what rues, what prayers pre-ferr'd  
What songs has the strange image heard?  
In what blind vigil stood interr'd  
For ages, till an English word  
Broke silence first at Nineveh?

Oh when upon each sculptured court,  
Where even the wind might not resort,—  
O'er which Time passed, of like import  
With the wild Arab boys at sport,—

A living face looked in to see:—  
Oh seemed it not—the spell once broke—  
As though the carven warriors woke,  
As though the shaft the string forsook,  
The cymbals clashed, the chariots shook,  
And there was life in Nineveh?

On London stones our sun anew  
The beast's recovered shadow threw.  
(No shade that plague of darkness knew,  
No light, no shade, while older grew

By ages the old earth and sea.)  
Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown  
Such proof to make thy godhead known?  
From their dead Past thou liv'st alone;  
And still thy shadow is thine own

Even as of yore in Nineveh.

That day whereof we keep record,  
When near thy city-gates the Lord  
Sheltered his Jonah with a gourd,  
This sun, (I said) here present, pour'd

Even thus this shadow that I see.  
This shadow has been shed the same  
From sun and moon,—from lamps which  
came  
For prayer,—from fifteen days of flame,  
The last, while smouldered to a name  
Sardanapalus' Nineveh.

Within thy shadow, haply, once  
Sennacherib has knelt, whose sons  
Smote him between the altar-stones:  
Or pale Semiramis her zones

Of gold, her incense brought to thee,  
In love for grace, in war for aid: . . .  
Ay, and who else? . . . till 'neath thy shade  
Within his trenches newly made  
Last year the Christian knelt and pray'd—

Not to thy strength—in Nineveh.\*

Now, thou poor god, within this hall  
Where the blank windows blind the wall  
From pedestal to pedestal,  
The kind of light shall on thee fall

Which London takes the day to be:  
While school-foundations in the act  
Of holiday, three files compact,  
Shall learn to view thee as a fact  
Connected with that zealous tract:  
‘Rome,—Babylon and Nineveh.’

\* During the excavations, Tiyari workmen held their services in the shadow of the great bulls (Layard's *Nineveh*, ch. ix).

Deemed they of this, those worshippers,  
When, in some mythic chain of verse  
Which man shall not again rehearse,  
The faces of thy ministers

Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?  
Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god  
Before whose feet men knelt unshod  
Deem that in this unblest abode  
Another scarce more unknown god  
Should house with him, from Nineveh?

Ah! in what quarries lay the stone  
From which this pygmy pile has grown,  
Unto man's need how long unknown,  
Since thy vast temples, court and cone,  
Rose far in desert history?

Ah! what is here that does not lie  
All strange to thine awakened eye?  
Ah! what is here can testify  
(Save that dumb presence of the sky)  
Unto thy day and Nineveh?

Why, of those mummies in the room  
Above, there might indeed have come  
One out of Egypt to thy home,  
An alien. Nay, but were not some  
Of these thine own ‘antiquity’?  
And now,—they and their gods and thou  
All relics here together,—now  
Whose profit? whether bull or cow,  
Isis or Ibis, who or how,  
Whether of Thebes or Nineveh?

The consecrated metals found,  
And ivory tablets, underground,  
Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd  
When air and daylight filled the mound,  
Fell into dust immediately.

And even as these, the images  
Of awe and worship,—even as these,—  
So, smitten with the sun's increase,  
Her glory mouldered and did cease  
From immemorial Nineveh.

The day her builders made their halt,  
Those cities of the lake of salt  
Stood firmly 'stablished without fault,  
Made proud with pillars of basalt,  
With sardonyx and porphyry.  
The day that Jonah bore abroad  
To Nineveh the voice of God,  
A brackish lake lay in his road,  
Where erst Pride fixed her sure abode,  
As then in royal Nineveh.

The day when he, Pride's lord and Man's,  
Showed all the kingdoms at a glance  
To Him before whose countenance  
The years recede, the years advance,  
And said, Fall down and worship me:—  
'Mid all the pomp beneath that look,  
Then stirred there, haply, some rebuke,  
Where to the wind the salt pools shook,  
And in those tracts, of life forsook,  
That knew thee not, O Nineveh!

Delicate harlot! On thy throne  
Thou with a world beneath thee prone  
In state for ages sat'st alone;  
And needs were years and lustres flown  
Ere strength of man could vanquish thee:  
Whom even thy victor foes must bring,  
Still royal, among maids that sing  
As with doves' voices, taboring  
Upon their breasts, unto the King,—  
A kingly conquest, Nineveh!

. . . Here woke my thought. The wind's slow sway  
Had waxed; and like the human play  
Of scorn that smiling spreads away,  
The sunshine shivered off the day:  
The callous wind, it seemed to me,  
Swept up the shadow from the ground:  
And pale as whom the Fates astound,  
The god forlorn stood winged and crown'd:  
Within I knew the cry lay bound  
Of the dumb soul of Nineveh.

And as I turned, my sense half shut  
Still saw the crowds of kerb and rut  
Go past as marshalled to the strut  
Of ranks in gypsum quaintly cut.  
It seemed in one same pageantry  
They followed forms which had been erst;  
To pass, till on my sight should burst  
That future of the best or worst  
When some may question which was first,  
Of London or of Nineveh.

For as that Bull-god once did stand  
And watched the burial-clouds of sand,  
Till these at last without a hand  
Rose o'er his eyes, another land,  
And blinded him with destiny:—  
So may he stand again; till now,  
In ships of unknown sail and prow,  
Some tribe of the Australian plough  
Bear him afar, — a relic now  
Of London, not of Nineveh!

Or it may chance indeed that when  
Man's age is hoary among men,—  
His centuries threescore and ten,—  
His furthest childhood shall seem then  
More clear than later times may be:  
Who, finding in this desert place  
This form, shall hold us for some race  
That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,  
But bowed its pride and vowed its praise  
Unto the god of Nineveh.

The smile rose first — anon drew nigh  
The thought: . . . Those heavy wings  
spread high  
So sure of flight, which do not fly;  
That set gaze never on the sky;  
Those scripted flanks it cannot see.

Its crown, a brow-contracting load;  
Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .  
(So grew the image as I trod:)  
O Nineveh, was this thy God,—  
Thine also, mighty Nineveh?

### THE PORTRAIT

[Composed 1847-70. — Published 1870.]

THIS is her picture as she was:  
It seems a thing to wonder on,  
As though mine image in the glass  
Should tarry when myself am gone.  
I gaze until she seems to stir,—  
Until mine eyes almost aver  
That now, even now, the sweet lips part  
To breathe the words of the sweet heart:  
And yet the earth is over her.

Alas! even such the thin-drawn ray  
That makes the prison-depths more  
rude,—  
The drip of water night and day  
Giving a tongue to solitude.  
Yet only this, of love's whole prize,  
Remains; save what in mournful guise  
Takes counsel with my soul alone,—  
Save what is secret and unknown,  
Below the earth, above the skies.

In painting her I shrined her face  
*suggetive*  
'Mid mystic trees, where light falls in  
Hardly at all; a covert place  
*but*  
Where you might think to find a din  
Of doubtful talk, and a live flame  
Wandering, and many a shape whose name  
*but*  
Not itself knoweth, and old dew, *uncanny*  
And your own footsteps meeting you,  
And all things going as they came.

A deep dim wood; and there she stands  
As in that wood that day: for so  
Was the still movement of her hands  
And such the pure line's gracious flow.  
And passing fair the type must seem,  
Unknown the presence and the dream.  
'Tis she: though of herself, alas!  
*note*  
Less than her shadow on the grass  
Or than her image in the stream.

That day we met there, I and she  
One with the other all alone;  
And we were blithe; yet memory  
Sadens those hours, as when the moon  
Looks upon daylight. And with her *deliberately*  
I stooped to drink the spring-water. *washed*  
Athirst where other waters sprang;  
And where the echo is, she sang — *accent*  
My soul another echo there. *with Rossetti*  
*carried on by*  
But when that hour my soul won strength  
For words whose silence wastes and kills,  
Dull raindrops smote us, and at length  
Thundered the heat within the hills.

That eve I spoke those words again  
Beside the pelted window-pane;  
And there she hearkened what I said,  
With under-glances that surveyed  
The empty pastures blind with rain.

Next day the memories of these things,  
Like leaves through which a bird has  
flown,  
Still vibrated with Love's warm wings;  
Till I must make them all my own  
And paint this picture. So, 'twixt ease  
Of talk and sweet long silences,  
She stood among the plants in bloom  
At windows of a summer room,  
To feign the shadow of the trees.

And as I wrought, while all above  
And all around was fragrant air,  
In the sick burthen of my love  
It seemed each sun-thrilled blossom there  
Beat like a heart among the leaves.  
O heart that never beats nor heaves,  
In that one darkness lying still,  
What now to thee my love's great will  
Or the fine web the sunshine weaves?

For now doth daylight disavow  
Those days,—nought left to see or  
hear.  
Only in solemn whispers now  
At night-time these things reach mine ear,  
When the leaf-shadows at a breath  
Shrink in the road, and all the heath,  
Forest and water, far and wide,  
In limpid starlight glorified,  
Lie like the mystery of death.

Last night at last I could have slept,  
And yet delayed my sleep till dawn,  
Still wandering. Then it was I wept:  
For unawares I came upon  
Those glades where once she walked with  
me:  
And as I stood there suddenly,  
All wan with traversing the night,  
Upon the desolate verge of light  
Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea.

Even so, where Heaven holds breath and  
hears  
The beating heart of Love's own breast—  
Where round the secret of all spheres  
All angels lay their wings to rest,—  
How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,  
When, by the new birth borne abroad  
Throughout the music of the suns,  
It enters in her soul at once  
And knows the silence there for God!

Here with her face doth memory sit  
Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,  
Till other eyes shall look from it,  
Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,

Even than the old gaze tenderer:  
While hopes and aims long lost with her  
Stand round her image side by side,  
Like tombs of pilgrims that have died  
About the Holy Sepulchre.

### SISTER HELEN

[Composed 1851. — Published 1854. — Revised 1880.]

'WHY did you melt your waxen man,  
Sister Helen?  
To-day is the third since you began.'  
'The time was long, yet the time ran,  
Little brother.'  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Three days to-day, between Hell and*  
*Heaven!*)

'But if you have done your work aright,  
Sister Helen,  
You'll let me play, for you said I might.'  
'Be very still in your play to-night,  
Little brother.'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Third night, to-night, between Hell and*  
*Heaven!*)

'You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,  
Sister Helen;  
If now it be molten, all is well.'  
'Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,  
Little brother.'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*What is this, between Hell and Heaven?*)

'Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,  
Sister Helen;  
How like dead folk he has dropped away!'  
'Nay now, of the dead what can you say,  
Little brother?'  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*What of the dead, between Hell and*  
*Heaven?*)

'See, see, the sunken pile of wood,  
Sister Helen,  
Shines through the thinned wax red as  
blood!'  
'Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,  
Little brother?'  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*How pale she is, between Hell and*  
*Heaven!*)

'Now close your eyes, for they're sick and  
sore,  
Sister Helen,  
And I'll play without the gallery door.'  
'Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,  
Little brother.'  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*What rest to-night between Hell and*  
*Heaven?*)

'Here high up in the balcony,  
Sister Helen,  
The moon flies face to face with me.'  
'Aye, look and say whatever you see,  
Little brother.'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What sight to-night, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,  
Sister Helen;  
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake.'  
'Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you  
spake,

Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What sound to-night, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'I hear a horse-tread, and I see,  
Sister Helen,

Three horsemen that ride terribly.'

'Little brother, whence come the three,  
Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Whence should they come, between Hell  
and Heaven?*)

'They come by the hill-verge from Boyne  
Bar,

Sister Helen,  
And one draws nigh, but two are afar.'

'Look, look, do you know them who they  
are,

Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Who should they be, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,  
Sister Helen,  
For I know the white mane on the blast.'

'The hour has come, has come at last,  
Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Her hour at last, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'He has made a sign and called Halloo!  
Sister Helen,  
And he says that he would speak with you.'

'Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,  
Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,  
Sister Helen,  
That Keith of Ewern's like to die.'

'And he and thou, and thou and I,  
Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
And they and we, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,  
Sister Helen,  
He sickened, and lies since then forlorn.'

'For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,  
Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and  
Heaven!*)

'Three days and nights he has lain abed,  
Sister Helen,  
And he prays in torment to be dead.'

'The thing may chance, if he have prayed,  
Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
If he have prayed, between Hell and  
Heaven!*)

'But he has not ceased to cry to-day,  
Sister Helen,  
That you should take your curse away.'

'My prayer was heard,—he need but pray,  
Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Shall God not hear, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'But he says, till you take back your ban,  
Sister Helen,  
His soul would pass, yet never can.'

'Nay then, shall I slay a living man,  
Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'But he calls for ever on your name,  
Sister Helen,  
And says that he melts before a flame.'

'My heart for his pleasure fared the same,  
Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Fire at the heart, between Hell and  
Heaven!*)

'Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,  
Sister Helen,  
For I know the white plume on the blast.'

'The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,  
Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,  
Sister Helen;  
But his words are drowned in the wind's  
course.'

'Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear per-  
force,

Little brother!'  
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,  
What word now heard, between Hell and  
Heaven?*)

'Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,  
Sister Helen,  
Is ever to see you ere he die.  
'In all that his soul sees, there am I,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*The soul's one sight, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'He sends a ring and a broken coin,  
Sister Helen,  
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne.  
'What else he broke will he ever join,

Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*No, never joined, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'He yields you these and craves full fain,  
Sister Helen,  
You pardon him in his mortal pain.  
'What else he took will he give again,

Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Not twice to give, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'He calls your name in an agony,  
Sister Helen,  
That even dead Love must weep to see.  
'Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,  
Sister Helen,  
For I know the white hair on the blast.  
'The short, short hour will soon be past,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Will soon be past, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'He looks at me and he tries to speak,  
Sister Helen,  
But oh! his voice is sad and weak!  
'What here should the mighty Baron seek,

Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?*)

'Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,  
Sister Helen,  
The body dies, but the soul shall live.  
'Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*As she forgives, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,  
Sister Helen,  
To save his dear son's soul alive.  
'Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'He cries to you, kneeling in the road,  
Sister Helen,  
To go with him for the love of God!  
'The way is long to his son's abode,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,  
Sister Helen,  
So darkly clad, I saw her not.  
'See her now or never see aught,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*What more to see, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Her hood falls back, and the moon shines  
fair,

Sister Helen,

On the lady of Ewern's golden hair.  
'Blest hour of my power and her despair,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Hour blest and bann'd, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did  
glow,

Sister Helen,

'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago.  
'One morn for pride and three days for  
woe,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Her clasped hands stretch from her bend-  
ing head,

Sister Helen;

With the loud wind's wail her sobs are  
wed.'

'What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*What strain but death's between Hell and Heaven?*)

'She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,  
Sister Helen,—

She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon.  
'Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe

tune,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*  
*Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,

Sister Helen,

And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow.'

'Let it turn whiter than winter snow,  
Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,  
Sister Helen!'

More loud than the vesper-chime it fell.'  
'No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,  
Sister Helen;

Is it in the sky or in the ground?'

'Say, have they turned their horses round,  
Little brother?'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?*)

'They have raised the old man from his knee,  
Sister Helen,

And they ride in silence hastily.'  
'More fast the naked soul doth flee,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,  
Sister Helen,

But the lady's dark steed goes alone.'  
'And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath

frown,  
Little brother.'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,  
Sister Helen,

And weary sad they look by the hill.'  
'But he and I are sadder still,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,  
Sister Helen,

And the flames are winning up apace!'  
'Yet here they burn but for a space,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!*)

'Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,'

Sister Helen,

Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?'  
'A soul that's lost as mine is lost,

Little brother!'

(*O Mother, Mary Mother, Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!*)

### STRATTON WATER

[Composed 1854-69. — Published 1870.]

'O HAVE you seen the Stratton flood  
That's great with rain to-day?  
It runs beneath your wall, Lord Sands,  
Full of the new-mown hay.

I led your hounds to Hutton bank  
To bathe at early morn:  
They got their bath by Borrowbrake  
Above the standing corn.'

Out from the castle-stair Lord Sands  
Looked up the western lea;  
The rook was grieving on her nest,  
The flood was round her tree.

Over the castle-wall Lord Sands  
Looked down the eastern hill:  
The stakes swam free among the boats,  
The flood was rising still.

'What's yonder far below that lies  
So white against the slope?'  
'O it's a sail o' your bonny barks  
The waters have washed up.'

'But I have never a sail so white,  
And the water's not yet there.'  
'O it's the swans o' your bonny lake  
The rising flood doth scare.'

'The swans they would not hold so still,  
So high they would not win.'  
'O it's Joyce my wife has spread her smock  
And fears to fetch it in.'

'Nay, knave, it's neither sail nor swans,  
Nor aught that you can say;  
For though your wife might leave her smock,  
Herself she'd bring away.'

Lord Sands had passed the turret-stair,  
The court, and yard, and all;  
The kine were in the byre that day,  
The nags were in the stall.

Lord Sands has won the sweltering slope  
Whereon the white shape lay:  
The clouds were still above the hill,  
And the shape was still as they.

Oh pleasant is the gaze of life  
And sad is death's blind head;  
But awful are the living eyes  
In the face of one thought dead!

'In God's name, Janet, is it me  
Thy ghost has come to seek?'  
'Nay, wait another hour, Lord Sands,—  
Be sure my ghost shall speak.'

A moment stood he as a stone,  
Then grovelled to his knee.  
'O Janet, O my love, my love,  
Rise up and come with me!'  
'O once before you bade me come,  
And it's here you have brought me!'

'O many's the sweet word, Lord Sands,  
You've spoken oft to me;  
But all that I have from you to-day  
Is the rain on my body.

'And many's the good gift, Lord Sands,  
You've promised oft to me;  
But the gift of yours I keep to-day  
Is the babe in my body.

'O it's not in any earthly bed  
That first my babe I'll see;  
For I have brought my body here  
That the flood may cover me.'

His face was close against her face,  
His hands of hers were fain:  
O her wet cheeks were hot with tears,  
Her wet hands cold with rain.

'They told me you were dead, Janet,—  
How could I guess the lie?'  
'They told me you were false, Lord Sands,  
What could I do but die?'

'Now keep you well, my brother Giles,  
Through you I deemed her dead!  
As wan as your towers be to-day,  
To-morrow they'll be red.'

'Look down, look down, my false mother,  
That bade me not to grieve;  
You'll look up when our marriage fires  
Are lit to-morrow eve.'

'O more than one and more than two  
The sorrow of this shall see:  
But it's to-morrow, love, for them,—  
To-day's for thee and me.'

He's drawn her face between his hands  
And her pale mouth to his:  
No bird that was so still that day  
Chirps sweeter than his kiss.

The flood was creeping round their feet.  
'O Janet, come away!  
The hall is warm for the marriage-rite,  
The bed for the birthday.'

'Nay, but I hear your mother cry,  
"Go bring this bride to bed!  
And would she christen her babe unborn,  
So wet she comes to wed?"'

'I'll be your wife to cross your door  
And meet your mother's e'e.  
We plighted troth to wed i' the kirk,  
And it's there I'll wed with ye.'

He's ta'en her by the short girdle  
And by the dripping sleeve:  
'Go fetch Sir Jock my mother's priest,—  
You'll ask of him no leave.'

'O it's one half-hour to reach the kirk  
And one for the marriage rite;  
And kirk and castle and castle-lands  
Shall be our babe's to-night.'

'The flood's in the kirkyard, Lord Sands,  
And round the belfry-stair,  
'I bade ye fetch the priest,' he said,  
'Myself shall bring him there.'

'It's for the lilt of wedding bells  
We'll have the hail to pour,  
And for the clink of bridle-reins  
The plashing of the oar.'

Beneath them on the nether hill  
A boat was floating wide:  
Lord Sands swam out and caught the oars  
And rowed to the hill-side.

He's wrapped her in a green mantle  
And set her softly in;  
Her hair was wet upon her face,  
Her face was gray and thin;  
And 'Oh!' she said, 'lie still, my babe,  
It's out you must not win!'

But woe's my heart for Father John!  
As hard as he might pray,  
There seemed no help but Noah's ark  
Or Jonah's fish that day.

The first strokes that the oars struck  
Were over the broad leas;  
The next strokes that the oars struck  
They pushed beneath the trees;

The last stroke that the oars struck,  
The good boat's head was met,  
And there the gate of the kirkyard  
Stood like a ferry-gate.

He's set his hand upon the bar  
And lightly leaped within:  
He's lifted her to his left shoulder,  
Her knees beside his chin.

The graves lay deep beneath the flood  
Under the rain alone;  
And when the foot-stone made him slip,  
He held by the head-stone.

The empty boat thrawed i' the wind,  
Against the postern tied.  
'Hold still, you've brought my love with  
me,  
You shall take back my bride.'

But woe's my heart for Father John  
And the saints he clamored to!  
There's never a saint but Christopher  
Might hale such buttocks through!

And 'Oh!' she said, 'on men's shoulders  
I well had thought to wend,  
And well to travel with a priest,  
But not to have cared or ken'd.

'And oh!' she said, 'it's well this way  
That I thought to have fared,—  
Not to have lighted at the kirk  
But stopped in the kirkyard.

'For it's oh and oh I prayed to God,  
Whose rest I hoped to win,  
That when to-night at your board-head  
You'd bid the feast begin,  
This water past your window-sill  
Might bear my body in.'

Now make the white bed warm and soft  
And greet the merry morn.  
The night the mother should have died  
The young son shall be born.

#### THE CARD-DEALER

[Composed 1849. — Published 1852.]

COULD you not drink her gaze like wine?  
Yet though its splendor swoon  
Into the silence languidly  
As a tune into a tune,  
Those eyes unravel the coiled night  
And know the stars at noon.

The gold that's heaped beside her hand,  
In truth rich prize it were;  
And rich the dreams that wreath her  
brows  
With magic stillness there;  
And he were rich who should unwind  
That woven golden hair.

Around her, where she sits, the dance  
Now breathes its eager heat;  
And not more lightly or more true  
Fall there the dancers' feet  
Than fall her cards on the bright board  
As 'twere an heart that beat.

Her fingers let them softly through,  
Smooth polished silent things;  
And each one as it falls reflects  
In swift light-shadowings,  
Blood-red and purple, green and blue,  
The great eyes of her rings.

Whom plays she with? With thee, who  
lov'st  
Those gems upon her hand;  
With me, who search her secret brows;  
With all men, bless'd or bann'd.  
We play together, she and we,  
Within a vain strange land:

A land without any order,—  
Day even as night, (one saith,) —  
Where who lieth down ariseth not  
Nor the sleeper awakeneth;  
A land of darkness as darkness itself  
And of the shadow of death.

What be her cards, you ask? Even these:—  
The heart, that doth but crave  
More, having fed; the diamond,  
Skilled to make base seem brave;  
The club, for smiting in the dark;  
The spade, to dig a grave.

And do you ask what game she plays?  
With me 'tis lost or won;  
With thee it is playing still; with him  
It is not well begun;  
But 'tis a game she plays with all  
Beneath the sway o' the sun.

Thou seest the card that falls,—she knows  
The card that followeth:  
Her game in thy tongue is called Life,  
As ebbs thy daily breath:  
When she shall speak, thou'l learn her  
tongue  
And know she calls it Death.

#### MY SISTER'S SLEEP

[Composed 1847-49. — Published 1850.]

SHE fell asleep on Christmas Eve:  
At length the long-ungranted shade  
Of weary eyelids overweigh'd  
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day  
Over the bed from chime to chime,  
Then raised herself for the first time,  
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little work-table was spread  
With work to finish. For the glare  
Made by her candle, she had care  
To work some distance from the bed.

Without there was a cold moon up,  
Of winter radiance sheer and thin;  
The hollow halo it was in  
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound  
Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove  
And reddened. In its dim alcove  
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,  
And my tired mind felt weak and blank;  
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank  
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling  
years

Heard in each hour, crept off; and then  
The ruffled silence spread again,  
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:  
Her needles, as she laid them down,  
Met lightly, and her silken gown  
Settled: no other noise than that.

'Glory unto the Newly Born!'

So, as said angels, she did say;  
Because we were in Christmas Day,  
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us

There was a pushing back of chairs,  
As some who had sat unawares  
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste

Our mother went where Margaret lay,  
Fearing the sounds o'er head—should  
they

Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned;

But suddenly turned back again;

And all her features seemed in pain  
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,

And held my breath, and spoke no word:

There was none spoken; but I heard  
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept;

And both my arms fell, and I said,

'God knows I knew that she was dead.'  
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling upon Christmas morn

A little after twelve o'clock

We said, ere the first quarter struck,  
'Christ's blessing on the newly born!'

#### THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES

(From François Villon)

[Composed 1869. — Published 1869.]

TELL me now in what hidden way is  
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?  
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thais,  
Neither of them the fairer woman?  
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,  
Only heard on river and mere,—  
She whose beauty was more than hu-  
man? . . .  
But where are the snows of yester-year?

*Was caught Villon music, diff.  
from R's other work.*

Where's Héloïse, the learned nun,  
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,  
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?  
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)  
And where, I pray you, is the Queen  
Who willed that Buridan should steer  
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the  
Seine? . . .

But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,  
With a voice like any mermaiden,—  
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,  
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—  
And that good Joan whom Englishmen  
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—  
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .  
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,  
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,  
Except with this for an overword,—  
But where are the snows of yester-year?

#### LOVE-LILY

[Composed 1869. — Published 1870.]

BETWEEN the hands, between the brows,  
Between the lips of Love-Lily,  
A spirit is born whose birth endows  
My blood with fire to burn through me;  
Who breathes upon my gazing eyes,  
Who laughs and murmurs in mine ear,  
At whose least touch my color flies,  
And whom my life grows faint to hear.

Within the voice, within the heart,  
Within the mind of Love-Lily,  
A spirit is born who lifts apart  
His tremulous wings and looks at me;  
Who on my mouth his finger lays,  
And shows, while whispering lutes con-  
fer,

That Eden of Love's watered ways  
Whose winds and spirits worship her.

Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and  
voice,

Kisses and words of Love-Lily,—  
Oh! bid me with your joy rejoice  
Till riotous longing rest in me!  
Ah! let not hope be still distraught,  
But find in her its gracious goal,  
Whose speech Truth knows not from her  
thought  
Nor Love her body from her soul.

#### SUDDEN LIGHT

[Composed 1854. — Published 1863.]

I HAVE been here before,  
But when or how I cannot tell:  
I know the grass beyond the door,  
The sweet keen smell,  
The sighing sound, the lights around the  
shore.

You have been mine before,—  
How long ago I may not know:  
But just when at that swallow's soar  
Your neck turned so,  
Some veil did fall,—I knew it all of yore.

Has this been thus before?  
And shall not thus time's eddying flight  
Still with our lives our loves restore  
In death's despite,  
And day and night yield one delight once more?

## A LITTLE WHILE

[Composed 1859.—Published 1870.]

A LITTLE while a little love  
The hour yet bears for thee and me  
Who have not drawn the veil to see  
If still our heaven be lit above.  
Thou merely, at the day's last sigh,  
Hast felt thy soul prolong the tone;  
And I have heard the night-wind cry  
And deemed its speech mine own.

A little while a little love  
The scattering autumn hoards for us  
Whose bower is not yet ruinous  
Nor quite unleaved our songless grove.  
Only across the shaken boughs  
We hear the flood-tides seek the sea,  
And deep in both our hearts they rouse  
One wail for thee and me.

A little while a little love  
May yet be ours who have not said  
The word it makes our eyes afraid  
To know that each is thinking of.  
Not yet the end: be our lips dumb  
In smiles a little season yet:  
I'll tell thee, when the end is come,  
How we may best forget.

## PENUMBRA

[Composed 1858.—Published 1870.]

I did not look upon her eyes,  
(Though scarcely seen, with no surprise,  
'Mid many eyes a single look,)  
Because they should not gaze rebuke,  
At night, from stars in sky and brook.

I did not take her by the hand,  
(Though little was to understand  
From touch of hand all friends might take,)  
Because it should not prove a flake  
Burnt in my palm to boil and ache.

I did not listen to her voice,  
(Though none had noted, where at choice  
All might rejoice in listening.)  
Because no such a thing should cling  
In the wood's moan at evening.

I did not cross her shadow once,  
(Though from the hollow west the sun's  
Last shadow runs along so far,)  
Because in June it should not bar  
My ways, at noon when fevers are.

They told me she was sad that day,  
(Though wherefore tell what love's sooth-say.  
Sooner than they, did register?)  
And my heart leapt and wept to her,  
And yet I did not speak nor stir.

So shall the tongues of the sea's foam  
(Though many voices therewith come  
From drowned hope's home to cry to me,)  
Bewail one hour the more, when sea  
And wind are one with memory.

## THE WOODSPURGE

[Composed 1856.—Published 1870.]

THE wind flapped loose, the wind was still,  
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:  
I had walked on at the wind's will,—  
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—  
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!  
My hair was over in the grass,  
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run  
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;  
Among those few, out of the sun,  
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be  
Wisdom or even memory:  
One thing then learnt remains to me,—  
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

## THE HONEYSUCKLE

[Composed 1853.—Published 1870.]

I PLUCKED a honeysuckle where  
The hedge on high is quick with thorn,  
And climbing for the prize, was torn,  
And fouled my feet in quag-water;  
And by the thorns and by the wind  
The blossom that I took was thinn'd,  
And yet I found it sweet and fair.

Thence to a richer growth I came,  
Where, nursed in mellow intercourse,  
The honeysuckles sprang by scores,  
Not harried like my single stem,  
All virgin lamps of scent and dew.  
So from my hand that first I threw,  
Yet plucked not any more of them.

## THE SEA-LIMITS

[Composed 1845. — Published 1870.]

CONSIDER the sea's listless chime:  
Time's self it is, made audible,—  
The murmur of the earth's own shell.  
Secret continuance sublime  
Is the sea's end: our sight may pass  
No furlong further. Since time was,  
This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's,—it hath  
The mournfulness of ancient life,  
Enduring always at dull strife.  
As the world's heart of rest and wrath,  
Its painful pulse is in the sands.  
Last utterly, the whole sky stands,  
Gray and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,  
Listen alone among the woods;  
Those voices of twin solitudes  
Shall have one sound alike to thee:  
Hark where the murmurs of thronged  
men  
Surge and sink back and surge again,—  
Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach  
And listen at its lips: they sigh  
The same desire and mystery,  
The echo of the whole sea's speech.  
And all mankind is thus at heart  
Not anything but what thou art:  
And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

SONNETS FOR PICTURES  
FOR A VENETIAN PASTORAL

BY GIORGIONE

(In the Louvre)

[Composed 1849. — Published 1850.]

WATER, for anguish of the solstice:—nay,  
But dip the vessel slowly,—nay, but lean  
And hark how at its verge the wave sighs  
in  
Reluctant. Hush! Beyond all depth away  
The heat lies silent at the brink of day:  
Now the hand trails upon the violin  
string  
That sobs, and the brown faces cease to  
sing,  
Sad with the whole of pleasure. Whither  
stray  
Her eyes now, from whose mouth the slim  
pipes creep  
And leave it pouting, while the shadowed  
grass  
Is cool against her naked side? Let  
be:—  
Say nothing now unto her lest she weep,  
Nor name this ever. Be it as it was,—  
Life touching lips with Immortality.

## MARY'S GIRLHOOD

[Composed 1848. — Published 1849.]

THIS is that blessed Mary, pre-elect  
God's Virgin. Gone is a great while, and  
she  
Dwelt young in Nazareth of Galilee.  
Unto God's will she brought devout respect,  
Profound simplicity of intellect,  
And supreme patience. From her mother's knee  
Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;  
Strong in grave peace; in pity circumspect.  
So held she through her girlhood; as it were  
An angel-watered lily, that near God  
Grows and is quiet. Till, one dawn at home,  
She woke in her white bed, and had no fear  
At all,—yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed:  
Because the fulness of the time was come.

## LILITH

[Composed 1867. — Published 1868.]

OF Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told  
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)  
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,  
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.  
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,  
And, subtly of herself contemplative,  
Draws men to watch the bright net she can weave,  
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.  
The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where  
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent  
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?  
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine,  
so went  
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent,  
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

## SIBYLLA PALMIFERA

[Composed 1867. — Published 1868.]

UNDER the arch of Life, where love and death,  
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw  
Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,  
I drew it in as simply as my breath.

*Fleshly, & was attack-*

Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,  
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which  
can draw,  
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,  
The allotted bondman of her palm and  
wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise  
Thy voice and hand shake still,—long  
known to thee  
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the  
beat  
Following her daily of thy heart and  
feet,  
How passionately and irretrievably,  
In what fond flight, how many ways and  
days!

### SONNETS FROM THE HOUSE OF LIFE

THE SONNET *one of great power in Eng.*

A sonnet is a moment's monument,—  
Memorial from the Soul's eternity  
To one dead deathless hour. Look that  
it be,  
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,  
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:  
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,  
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time  
see  
Its flowering crest impeared and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals  
The soul,—its converse, to what Power  
't is due:—  
Whether for tribute to the august appeals  
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,  
It serve: or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous  
breath,  
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

#### I. LOVE ENTHRONED

I MARKED all kindred Powers the heart  
finds fair:—  
Truth, with awed lips; and Hope, with  
eyes upcast,  
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the  
ashen Past  
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare;  
And Youth, with still some single golden  
hair  
Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last  
Embrace wherein two sweet arms held  
him fast;  
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death  
to wear.

Love's throne was not with these; but far  
above  
All passionate wind of welcome and fare-  
well  
He sat in breathless bowers they dream  
not of;

Though Truth foreknow Love's heart,  
and Hope foretell,  
And fame be for Love's sake desirable,  
And Youth be dear, and Life be sweet to  
Love.

#### II. BRIDAL BIRTH

As WHEN desire, long darkling, dawns, and  
first  
The mother looks upon the newborn  
child,  
Even so my Lady stood at gaze and  
smiled  
When her soul knew at length the Love it  
nurs'd.  
Born with her life, creature of poignant  
thirst  
And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love  
lay  
Quickening in darkness, till a voice that  
day  
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were  
burst.

Now, shadowed by his wings, our faces  
yearn  
Together, as his fullgrown feet now  
range  
The grove, and his warm hands our  
couch prepare  
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn  
Be born his children, when Death's nuptial  
change  
Leaves us for light the halo of his  
hair.

#### IV. LOVESIGHT

WHEN do I see thee most, beloved one?  
When in the light the spirits of mine  
eyes  
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize  
The worship of that Love through thee  
made known?

Or when in the dusk hours, (we two  
alone,)  
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies  
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage  
lies,  
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! if I no more should see  
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of  
thee,  
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring.—  
How then should sound upon Life's darkening  
slope  
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves  
of Hope,  
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

#### V. HEART'S HOPE

By what word's power, the key of paths  
untrod,  
Shall I the difficult deeps of Love explore,

Till parted waves of Song yield up the shore  
 Even as that sea which Israel crossed dry-shod?  
 For lo! in some poor rhythmic period,  
   Lady, I fain would tell how evermore  
   Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor  
   Thee from myself, neither our love from God.  
 Yea, in God's name, and Love's, and thine,  
   would I  
   Draw from one loving heart such evidence  
 As to all hearts all things shall signify;  
   Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and intense  
   As instantaneous penetrating sense,  
 In Spring's birth-hour, of other Springs gone by.

## IX. PASSION AND WORSHIP

ONE flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player  
 Even where my lady and I lay all alone;  
 Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is unknown;  
 Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here:  
 Only my strains are to Love's dear ones dear."  
 Then said I: "Through thine hautboy's rapturous tone  
 Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,  
 And still she deems the cadence deep and clear."  
 Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of Love,  
 And this Love's Worship: both he plights to me.  
 Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea:  
 But where wan water trembles in the grove  
 And the wan moon is all the light thereof.  
 This harp still makes my name its voluntary."

## X. THE PORTRAIT

O LORD of all compassionate control,  
 O Love! let this my lady's picture glow  
 Under my hand to praise her name, and show  
 Even of her inner self the perfect whole:  
 That he who seeks her beauty's furthest goal,  
   Beyond the light that the sweet glances throw  
   And refluent wave of the sweet smile,  
     may know  
 The very sky and sea-line of her soul.  
 Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning throat  
   The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,

The shadowed eyes remember and fore-see.  
 Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note  
   That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)  
   They that would look on her must come to me.

## XI. THE LOVE-LETTER

WARMED by her hand and shadowed by her hair  
 As close she leaned and poured her heart through thee,  
 Whereof the articulate throbs accompany  
 The smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair,—  
 Sweet fluttering sheet, even of her breath aware,—  
 Oh let thy silent song disclose to me  
   That soul wherewith her lips and eyes agree  
 Like married music in Love's answering air.  
 Fain had I watched her when, at some fond thought,  
 Her bosom to the writing closerlier press'd,  
 And her breast's secrets peered into her breast;  
 When, through eyes raised an instant, her soul sought  
 My soul, and from the sudden confluence caught  
   The words that made her love the loveliest.

## XV. THE BIRTH-BOND

HAVE you not noted, in some family  
 Where two were born of a first marriage-bed,  
 How still they own their gracious bond,  
   though fed  
 And nursed on the forgotten breast and knee?—  
 How to their father's children they shall be  
   In act and thought of one goodwill; but each  
   Shall for the other have, in silence speech,  
 And in a word complete community?

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,  
 That among souls allied to mine was yet  
 One nearer kindred than life hinted of.  
 O born with me somewhere that men forget,  
   And though in years of sight and sound unmet,  
 Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!

## XVIII. GENIUS IN BEAUTY

BEAUTY like hers is genius. Not the call  
Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime,  
—Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones  
of time,—  
Is more with compassed mysteries musical;  
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet  
footfall  
More gathered gifts exuberant Life be-  
queathes  
Than doth this sovereign face, whose  
love-spell breathes  
Even from its shadowed contour on the  
wall.

As many men are poets in their youth,  
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires  
prolong  
Even through all change the indomitable  
song;  
So in likewise the envenomed years, whose  
tooth  
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of  
ruth,  
Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no  
wrong.

## XIX. SILENT NOON

YOUR hands lie open in the long fresh  
grass,—  
The finger-points look through like rosy  
blooms:  
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture  
gleams and glooms  
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and  
amass.  
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,  
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver  
edge  
Where the cow-parsley skirts the haw-  
thorn-hedge.  
'T is visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the  
dragon-fly  
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from  
the sky:—  
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from  
above.  
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless  
dower,  
This close-companionsed inarticulate hour  
When twofold silence was the song of  
love.

## XXI. LOVE-SWEETNESS

SWEET dimness of her loosened hair's  
downfall  
About thy face; her sweet hands round  
thy head  
In gracious fostering union garlanded;  
Her tremulous smiles; her glances' sweet  
recall

Of love; her murmuring sighs memorial;  
Her mouth's culled sweetness by thy  
kisses shed  
On cheeks and neck and eyelids, and so  
led  
Back to her mouth which answers there  
for all:—

What sweeter than these things, except the  
thing  
In lacking which all these would lose their  
sweet:—  
The confident heart's still fervor: the  
swift beat  
And soft subsidence of the spirit's wing,  
Then when it feels, in cloud-girt wayfaring,  
The breath of kindred plumes against its  
feet?

## XXIV. PRIDE OF YOUTH

EVEN as a child, of sorrow that we give  
The dead, but little in his heart can find  
Since without need of thought to his  
clear mind  
Their turn it is to die and his to live:—  
Even so the wingèd New Love smiles to  
receive  
Along his eddying plumes the auroral  
wind,  
Nor, forward glorying, casts one look  
behind  
Where night-rack shrouds the Old Love  
fugitive.

There is a change in every hour's recall,  
And the last cowslip in the fields we see  
On the same day with the first corn-  
poppy.  
Alas for hourly change! Alas for all  
The loves that from his hand proud Youth  
lets fall,  
Even as the beads of a told rosary!

## XXVII. HEART'S COMPASS

SOMETIMES thou seem'st not as thyself  
alone,  
But as the meaning of all things that are;  
A breathless wonder, shadowing forth  
afar  
Some heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon;  
Whose unstirred lips are music's visible  
tone;  
Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul un-  
bar,  
Being of its furthest fires oracular;—  
The evident heart of all life sown and  
mown.

Even such Love is; and is not thy name  
Love?  
Yea, by thy hand the Love-god rends  
apart  
All gathering clouds of Night's ambig-  
uous art;

Flings them far down, and sets thine eyes  
above;  
And simply, as some gage of flower or  
glove,  
Stakes with a smile the world against thy  
heart.

## XXXI. HER GIFTS

HIGH grace, the dower of queens; and  
therewithal  
Some wood-born wonder's sweet simplic-  
ity;  
A glance like water brimming with the  
sky  
Or hyacinth-light where forest-shadows  
fall;  
Such thrilling pallor of cheek as doth en-  
thrall  
The heart; a mouth whose passionate  
forms imply  
All music and all silence held thereby;  
Deep golden locks, her sovereign coronal;  
  
A round reared neck, meet column of  
Love's shrine  
To cling to when the heart takes sanc-  
tuary;  
Hands which for ever at Love's bidding  
be.  
And soft-stirred feet still answering to his  
sign.—  
These are her gifts, as tongue may tell  
them o'er.  
Breathe low her name, my soul; for that  
means more.

## XXXIV. THE DARK GLASS

NOT I myself know all my love for thee:  
How should I reach so far, who cannot  
weigh  
To-morrow's dower by gage of yester-  
day?  
Shall birth and death, and all dark names  
that be  
As doors and windows bared to some loud  
sea,  
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face  
with spray;  
And shall my sense pierce love,—the  
last relay  
And ultimate outpost of eternity?

Lo! what am I to Love, the lord of all?  
One murmuring shell he gathers from  
the sand,—  
One little heart-flame sheltered in his  
hand.  
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clear-  
est call  
And veriest touch of powers primordial  
That any hour-girt life may understand.

## XL. SEVERED SELVES

Two separate divided silences,  
Which, brought together, would find lov-  
ing voice;  
Two glances which together would rejoice  
In love, now lost like stars beyond dark  
trees;  
Two hands apart whose touch alone gives  
ease;  
Two bosoms which, heart-shrined with  
mutual flame,  
Would, meeting in one clasp, be made the  
same;  
Two souls, the shores wave-mocked of  
sundering seas:—

Such are we now. Ah! may our hope fore-  
cast  
Indeed one hour again, when on this  
stream  
Of darkened love once more the light shall  
gleam?—  
An hour how slow to come, how quickly  
past,—  
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves  
at last  
Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated  
dream.

## XLVIII. DEATH-IN-LOVE

THERE came an image in Life's retinue  
That had Love's wings and bore his  
gonfalon:  
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought  
thereon,  
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!  
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens  
to,  
Shook in its folds; and through my heart  
its power  
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour  
When birth's dark portal groaned and all  
was new.  
But a veiled woman followed, and she  
caught  
The banner round its staff, to furl and  
cling,—  
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's  
wing,  
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,  
And said to me, "Behold, there is no  
breath:  
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

## LIII. WITHOUT HER

WHAT of her glass without her? The  
blank gray  
There where the pool is blind of the  
moon's face.  
Her dress without her? The tossed  
empty space  
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed  
away.

Her paths without her? Day's appointed sway  
Usurped by desolate night. Her pillow'd place  
Without her? Tears, ah me! for love's good grace  
And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her? Nay, poor heart,  
Of thee what word remains ere speech be still?  
A wayfarer by barren ways and chill,  
Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,  
Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,  
Sheds doubled darkness up the laboring hill.

## LV. STILLBORN LOVE

THE hour which might have been yet might not be,  
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore  
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore  
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?  
Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,  
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before  
The house of Love, hears through the echoing door  
His hours elect in choral consonancy.

But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand  
Together tread at last the immortal strand  
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?  
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned  
And leaped to them and in their faces yearned:  
"I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

## LXIII. INCLUSIVENESS

THE changing guests, each in a different mood,  
Sit at the roadside table and arise:  
And every life among them in likewise  
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.  
What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood  
How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?—  
Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,  
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?

May not this ancient room thou sit'st in dwell  
In separate living souls for joy or pain?  
Nay, all its corners may be painted plain

Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well  
And may be stamped, a memory all in vain,  
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.

## LXV. KNOWN IN VAIN

As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,  
Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,  
The Holy of holies; who because they scoff'd  
Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope  
With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope;  
Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they laugh'd  
In speech; nor speak, at length; but sitting oft  
Together, within hopeless sight of hope  
For hours are silent:—So it happeneth  
When Work and Will awake too late,  
to gaze  
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.  
Ah! who shall dare to search through what sad maze  
Thenceforth their incommunicable ways  
Follow the desultory feet of Death?

## LXX. THE HILL SUMMIT

THIS feast-day of the sun, his altar there  
In the broad west has blazed for vesper-song;  
And I have loitered in the vale too long  
And gaze now a belated worshipper.  
Yet may I not forget that I was 'ware,  
So journeying, of his face at intervals  
Transfigured where the fringed horizon falls,—  
A fiery bush with coruscating hair.

And now that I have climbed and won this height,  
I must tread downward through the sloping shade  
And travel the bewildered tracks till night.  
Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed  
And see the gold air and the silver fade  
And the last bird fly into the last light.

## LXXI. THE CHOICE—I

EAT thou and drink; to-morrow thou shalt die.  
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,  
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold  
Thy sultry hair up from my face; that I

May pour for thee this golden wine, brim-high,

Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.

We'll drown all hours: thy song, while hours are toll'd,  
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.

Now kiss, and think that there are really those,

My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase

Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way!

Through many years they toil; then on a day

They die not,—for their life was death, —but cease;

And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

#### LXXXII. THE CHOICE—II

WATCH thou and fear; tomorrow thou shalt die.

O art thou sure thou shalt have time for death?

Is not the day which God's word promiseth

To come man knows not when? In yonder sky,

Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth: can I

Or thou assure him of his goal? God's breath

Even at this moment haply quickeneth The air to a flame; till spirits, always nigh Though screened and hid, shall walk the daylight here.

And dost thou prate of all that man shall do?

Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be

Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?

Will his strength slay thy worm in Hell? Go to:

Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

#### LXXXIII. THE CHOICE—III

THINK thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.

Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,

Thou sayst: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er

Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,

Man climb until he touched the truth; and I,

Even I, am he whom it was destined for."

How should this be? Art thou then so much more

Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound

Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;

Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.

Miles and miles distant though the last line be,

And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—

Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

#### LXXXI. MEMORIAL THRESHOLDS

WHAT place so strange,—though unrevealed snow

With unimaginable fires arise At the earth's end,—what passion of surprise

Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long ago?

Lo! this is none but I this hour; and lo!

This is the very place which to mine eyes Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,

'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I know.

City, of thine a single simple door, By some new Power reduplicate, must be Even yet my life-porch in eternity, Even with one presence filled, as once of yore:

Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor

Thee and thy years and these my words and me.

#### LXXXVI. LOST DAYS

THE lost days of my life until to-day, What were they, could I see them on the street

Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat

Sown once for food but trodden into clay? Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?

Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?

Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat

The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?

I do not see them here; but after death God knows I know the faces I shall see, Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.

"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"

"And I—and I—thyself," (lo! each one saith,) "And thou thyself to all eternity!"

## XC. "RETRO ME, SATHANA!"

Get thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curved,  
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer  
Is snatched from out his chariot by the  
hair,  
So shall Time be; and as the void car,  
hurled  
Abroad by reiless steeds, even so the  
world:  
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,  
It shall be sought and not found any-  
where.  
Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,  
Thy perilous wings can beat and break like  
lath  
Much mightiness of men to win thee  
praise.  
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow  
ways.  
Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered  
path,  
Mayst wait the turning of the phials of  
wrath  
For certain years, for certain months  
and days.

## XCII. THE SUN'S SHAME

BEHOLDING youth and hope in mockery  
caught  
From life; and mocking pulses that re-  
main  
When the soul's death of bodily death is  
fain;  
Honor unknown, and honor known un-  
sought;  
And penury's sedulous self-torturing  
thought  
On gold, whose master therewith buys  
his bane;  
And longed-for woman longing all in  
vain  
For lonely man with love's desire dis-  
traught;  
And wealth, and strength, and power, and  
pleasantness,  
Given unto bodies of whose souls men  
say,  
None poor and weak, slavish and foul, as  
they:  
Beholding these things, I behold no less  
The blushing morn and blushing eve con-  
fess  
The shame that loads the intolerable day.

## XCVII. A SUPERSCRIPTION

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-  
been;  
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Fare-  
well;  
Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea  
shell  
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet be-  
tween;

Unto thine eyes the glass where that is  
seen  
Which had Life's form and Love's, but  
by my spell  
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,  
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail  
screen.

Mark me, how still I am! But should  
there dart  
One moment through thy soul the soft  
surprise  
Of that winged Peace which lulls the  
breath of sighs,—  
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn  
apart  
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart  
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

## CL. THE ONE HOPE

WHEN vain desire at last and vain regret  
Go hand in hand to death, and all is  
vain,  
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain  
And teach the unforgetful to forget?  
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long  
unmet,—  
Or may the soul at once in a green  
plain  
Stoop through the spray of some sweet  
life-fountain  
And cull the dew-drenched flowering  
amulet?  
Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air  
Between the scripted petals softly  
blown  
Peers breathless for the gift of grace  
unknown,—  
Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er  
But only the one Hope's one name be  
there—  
Not less nor more, but even that word  
alone.

## THREE SHADOWS

[Composed 1876.—Published 1881.]

I LOOKED and saw your eyes  
In the shadow of your hair,  
As a traveller sees the stream  
In the shadow of the wood;  
And I said, "My faint heart sighs,  
Ah me! to linger there,  
To drink deep and to dream  
In that sweet solitude."

I looked and saw your heart  
In the shadow of your eyes,  
As a seeker sees the gold  
In the shadow of the stream;  
And I said, "Ah me! what art  
Should win the immortal prize,  
Whose want must make life cold  
And Heaven a hollow dream?"

I looked and saw your love  
In the shadow of your heart,  
As a diver sees the pearl  
In the shadow of the sea;  
And I murmured, not above  
My breath, but all apart,—  
“Ah! you can love, true girl,  
And is your love for me?”

## INSOMNIA

[Composed 1881. — Published 1881.]

THIN are the night-skirts left behind  
By daybreak hours that onward creep  
And thin, alas! the shred of sleep  
That wavers with the spirit's wind:  
But in half-dreams that shift and roll  
And still remember and forget,  
My soul this hour has drawn your soul  
A little nearer yet.

Our lives, most dear, are never near,  
Our thoughts are never far apart,  
Though all that draws us heart to heart  
Seems fainter now and now more clear.  
To-night Love claims his full control,  
And with desire and with regret  
My soul this hour has drawn your soul  
A little nearer yet.

Is there a home where heavy earth  
Melts to bright air that breathes no pain,  
Where water leaves no thirst again  
And springing fire is Love's new birth?  
If faith long bound to one true goal  
May there at length its hope beget,  
My soul that hour shall draw your soul  
For ever nearer yet.

## THE CLOUD CONFINES

[Composed 1871. — Published 1872.]

THE day is dark and the night  
To him that would search their heart;  
No lips of cloud that will part  
Nor morning song in the light:  
Only, gazing alone,  
To him wild shadows are shown,  
Deep under deep unknown  
And height above unknown height.  
Still we say as we go,—  
“Strange to think by the way,  
Whatever there is to know,  
That shall we know one day.”

The Past is over and fled;  
Named new, we name it the old;  
Thereof some tale hath been told,  
But no word comes from the dead;  
Whether at all they be,  
Or whether as bond or free,  
Or whether they too were we,

Or by what spell they have sped.  
Still we say as we go,—  
“Strange to think by the way,  
Whatever there is to know,  
That shall we know one day.”

What of the heart of hate  
That beats in thy breast, O Time?—  
Red strife from the furthest prime,  
And anguish of fierce debate;  
War that shatters her slain,  
And peace that grinds them as grain,  
And eyes fixed ever in vain  
On the pitiless eyes of Fate.  
Still we say as we go,—  
“Strange to think by the way,  
Whatever there is to know,  
That shall we know one day.”

What of the heart of love  
That bleeds in thy breast, O Man?—  
Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban  
Of fangs that mock them above;  
Thy bells prolonged unto knells,  
Thy hope that a breath dispels,  
Thy bitter forlorn farewells  
And the empty echoes thereof?  
Still we say as we go,—  
“Strange to think by the way,  
Whatever there is to know,  
That shall we know one day.”

The sky leans dumb on the sea,  
Aweary with all its wings;  
And oh! the song the sea sings  
Is dark everlasting.  
Our past is clean forgot,  
Our present is and is not,  
Our future's a sealed seedplot,  
And what betwixt them are we?—  
We who say as we go,—  
“Strange to think by the way,  
Whatever there is to know,  
That shall we know one day.”

## THE DAY-DREAM

(FOR A PICTURE)

THE thronged boughs of the shadowy sycamore  
Still bear young leaflets half the summer through;  
From when the robin 'gainst the unhidden blue  
Perched dark, till now, deep in the leafy core,  
The embowered thrush's urgent wood-notes soar  
Through summer silence. Still the leaves come new;  
Yet never rosy-sheathed as those which drew  
Their spiral tongues from spring-buds herefore.

Within the branching shade of Reverie  
 Dreams even may spring till autumn: yet  
 none be  
 Like woman's budding day-dream spirit-  
 fann'd.  
 Lo! tow'r'd deep skies, not deeper than her  
 look,  
 She dreams; till now on her forgotten  
 book  
 Drops the forgotten blossom from her  
 hand.

## THE KING'S TRAGEDY

JAMES I OF SCOTS.—20TH FEBRUARY, 1437

NOTE.—Tradition says that Catherine Douglas, in honor of her heroic act when she barred the door with her arm against the murderers of James the First of Scots, received popularly the name of "Barlass." The name remains to her descendants, the Barlas family, in Scotland, who bear for their crest a-broken arm. She married Alexander Lovell of Bolunnie.

A few stanzas from King James's lovely poem, known as *The King's Quhair*, are quoted in the course of this ballad. The writer must express regret for the necessity which has compelled him to shorten the ten-syllabled lines to eight syllables, in order that they might harmonize with the ballad metre.

[Composed 1881.—Published 1881.]

I CATHERINE am a Douglas born,  
 A name to all Scots dear;  
 And Kate Barlass they've called me now  
 Through many a waning year.

This old arm's withered now. 'T was once  
 Most deft 'mong maidens all  
 To rein the steed, to wing the shaft,  
 To smite the palm-play ball.

In hall adown the close-linked dance  
 It has shone most white and fair;  
 It has been the rest for a true lord's head,  
 And many a sweet babe's nursing-bed,  
 And the bar to a King's chamb're.

Aye, lasses, draw round Kate Barlass,  
 And hark with bated breath  
 How good King James, King Robert's son,  
 Was foully done to death.

Through all the days of his gallant youth  
 The princely James was pent,  
 By his friends at first and then by his foes,  
 In long imprisonment.

For the elder Prince, the kingdom's heir,  
 By treason's murderous brood  
 Was slain; and the father quaked for the  
 child  
 With the royal mortal blood.

I' the Bass Rock fort, by his father's care,  
 Was his childhood's life assured;  
 And Henry the subtle Bolingbroke,  
 Proud England's King, 'neath the southron  
 yoke  
 His youth for long years immured.

Yet in all things meet for a kingly man  
 Himself did he approve;  
 And the nightingale through his prison-  
 wall  
 Taught him both lore and love.

For once, when the bird's song drew him  
 close  
 To the opened window-pane,  
 In her bowers beneath a lady stood,  
 A light of life to his sorrowful mood,  
 Like a lily amid the rain.

And for her sake, to the sweet bird's note,  
 He framed a sweeter Song,  
 More sweet than ever a poet's heart  
 Gave yet to the English tongue.

She was a lady of royal blood;  
 And when, past sorrow and teen,  
 He stood where still through his crownless  
 years

His Scottish realm had been,  
 At Scone were the happy lovers crowned,  
 A heart-wed King and Queen.

But the bird may fall from the bough of  
 youth,  
 And song be turned to moan,  
 And Love's storm-cloud be the shadow of  
 Hate,  
 When the tempest-waves of a troubled  
 State  
 Are beating against a throne.

Yet well they loved; and the god of Love,  
 Whom well the King had sung,  
 Might find on the earth no truer hearts  
 His lowliest swains among.

From the days when first she rode abroad  
 With Scottish maids in her train,  
 I Catherine Douglas won the trust  
 Of my mistress sweet Queen Jane.

And oft she sighed, "To be born a King!"  
 And oft along the way  
 When she saw the homely lovers pass  
 She has said, "Alack the day!"

Years waned,—the loving and toiling  
 years:  
 Till England's wrong renewed  
 Drove James, by outrage cast on his crown,  
 To the open field of feud.

'T was when the King and his host were  
 met  
 At the leaguer of Roxbro' hold,  
 The Queen o' the sudden sought his camp  
 With a tale of dread to be told.

And she showed him a secret letter writ  
 That spoke of treasonous strife,  
 And how a band of his noblest lords  
 Were sworn to take his life.

"And it may be here or it may be there,  
In the camp or the court," she said:  
"But for my sake come to your people's  
arms  
And guard your royal head."

Quoth he, "T is the fifteenth day of the  
siege,  
And the castle's nigh to yield."  
O face your foes on your throne," she  
cried,  
"And show the power you wield;  
And under your Scottish people's love  
You shall sit as under your shield."

At the fair Queen's side I stood that day  
When he bade them raise the siege,  
And back to his Court he sped to know  
How the lords would meet their Liege.

But when he summoned his Parliament,  
The louring brows hung round,  
Like clouds that circle the mountain-head  
Ere the first low thunders sound.

For he had tamed the nobles' lust  
And curbed their power and pride,  
And reached out an arm to right the poor  
Through Scotland far and wide;  
And many a lordly wrong-doer  
By the headsman's axe had died.

'T was then upspoke Sir Robert Græme,  
The bold o'ermastering man:—  
"O King, in the name of your Three Estates  
I set you under their ban!"

"For, as your lords made oath to you  
Of service and fealty,  
Even in like wise you pledged your oath  
Their faithful sire to be:—

"Yet all we here that are nobly sprung  
Have mourned dear kith and kin  
Since first for the Scottish Barons' curse  
Did your bloody rule begin."

With that he laid his hands on his King:—  
"Is this not so, my lords?"  
But of all who had sworn to league with  
him  
Not one spake back to his words.

Quoth the King:—"Thou speak'st but for  
one Estate,  
Nor doth it avow thy gage.  
Let my liege lords hale this traitor hence!"  
The Græme fired dark with rage:—  
"Who works for lesser men than himself,  
He earns but a witless wage!"

But soon from the dungeon where he lay  
He won by privy plots,  
And forth he fled with a price on his head  
To the country of the Wild Scots.

And word there came from Sir Robert  
Græme

To the King at Edinbro':—  
"No Liege of mine thou art; but I see  
From this day forth alone in thee  
God's creature, my mortal foe."

"Through thee are my wife and children  
lost,  
My heritage and lands;  
And when my God shall show me a way,  
Thyself my mortal foe will I slay  
With these my proper hands."

Against the coming of Christmastide  
That year the King bade call  
I' the Black Friars' Charterhouse of Perth  
A solemn festival.

And we of his household rode with him  
In a close-ranked company:  
But not till the sun had sunk from his  
throne  
Did we reach the Scottish Sea.

That eve was clenched for a boding storm,  
'Neath a toilsome moon half seen;  
The cloud stooped low and the surf rose  
high;  
And where there was a line of the sky,  
Wild wings loomed dark between.

And on a rock of the black beach-side  
By the veiled moon dimly lit,  
There was something seemed to heave with  
life  
As the King drew nigh to it.

And was it only the tossing furze  
Or brake of the waste sea-wold?  
Or was it an eagle bent to the blast?  
When near we came, we knew it at last  
For a woman tattered and old.

But it seemed as though by a fire within  
Her writhen limbs were wrung;  
And as soon as the King was close to her,  
She stood up gaunt and strong.

'T was then the moon sailed clear of the  
rack  
On high in her hollow dome;  
And still as aloft with hoary crest  
Each clamorous wave rang home,  
Like fire in snow the moonlight blazed  
Amid the champing foam.

And the woman held his eyes with her  
eyes:—

"O King, thou art come at last;  
But thy wraith has haunted the Scottish  
Sea  
To my sight for four years past.

"Four years it is since first I met,  
 'Twixt the Duchray and the Dhu,  
 A shape whose feet clung close in a  
 shroud,  
 And that shape for thine I knew.

"A year again, and on Inchkeith Isle  
 I saw thee pass in the breeze,  
 With the cerecloth risen above thy feet  
 And wound about thy knees.

"And yet a year, in the Links of Forth,  
 As a wanderer without rest,  
 Thou cam'st with both thine arms i' the  
 shroud  
 That clung high up thy breast.

"And in this hour I find thee here,  
 And well mine eyes may note  
 That the winding-sheet hath passed thy  
 breast  
 And risen around thy throat.

"And when I meet thee again, O King,  
 That of death hast such sore drouth,—  
 Except thou turn again on this shore,—  
 The winding-sheet shall have moved once  
 more  
 And covered thine eyes and mouth.

"O King, whom poor men bless for their  
 King,  
 Of thy fate be not so fain;  
 But these my words for God's message  
 take,  
 And turn thy steed, O King, for her sake  
 Who rides beside thy rein!"

While the woman spoke, the King's horse  
 reared  
 As if it would breast the sea,  
 And the Queen turned pale as she heard on  
 the gale  
 The voice die dolorously.

When the woman ceased, the steed was still,  
 But the King gazed on her yet,  
 And in silence save for the wail of the sea  
 His eyes and her eyes met.

At last he said:—"God's ways are His  
 own;  
 Man is but shadow and dust.  
 Last night I prayed by His altar-stone;  
 To-night I wend to the Feast of His Son;  
 And in Him I set my trust.

"I have held my people in sacred charge,  
 And have not feared the sting  
 Of proud men's hate,—to His will resign'd  
 Who has but one same death for a hind  
 And one same death for a King.

"And if God in His wisdom have brought  
 close  
 The day when I must die,  
 That day by water or fire or air  
 My feet shall fall in the destined snare  
 Wherever my road may lie.

"What man can say but the Fiend hath set  
 Thy sorcery on my path,  
 My heart with the fear of death to fill,  
 And turn me against God's very will  
 To sink in His burning wrath?"

The woman stood as the train rode past,  
 And moved nor limb nor eye;  
 And when we were shipped, we saw her  
 there  
 Still standing against the sky.

As the ship made way, the moon once  
 more  
 Sank slow in her rising pall;  
 And I thought of the shrouded wraith of  
 the King,  
 And I said, "The Heavens know all."

And now, ye lasses, must ye hear  
 How my name is Kate Barlass:—  
 But a little thing, when all the tale  
 Is told of the weary mass  
 Of crime and woe which in Scotland's  
 realm  
 God's will let come to pass.

"T was in the Charterhouse of Perth  
 That the King and all his Court  
 Were met, the Christmas Feast being done,  
 For solace and disport.

"T was a wind-wild eve in February,  
 And against the casement-pane  
 The branches smote like summoning hands  
 And muttered the driving rain.

And when the wind swooped over the lift  
 And made the whole heaven frown,  
 It seemed a grip was laid on the walls  
 To tug the house-top down.

And the Queen was there, more stately fair  
 Than a lily in garden set;  
 And the King was loth to stir from her  
 side;  
 For as on the day when she was his bride,  
 Even so he loved her yet.

And the Earl of Athole, the King's false  
 friend,  
 Sat with him at the board;  
 And Robert Stuart the chamberlain  
 Who had sold his sovereign Lord.

Yet the traitor Christopher Chaumber there  
 Would fain have told him all,  
 And vainly four times that night he strove  
 To reach the King through the hall,

But the wine is bright at the goblet's brim  
 Though the poison lurk beneath;  
 And the apples still are red on the tree  
 Within whose shade may the adder be  
 That shall turn thy life to death.

There was a knight of the King's fast  
 friends  
 Whom he called the King of Love;  
 And to such bright cheer and courtesy  
 That name might best behove.

And the King and Queen both loved him  
 well  
 For his gentle knighthood;  
 And with him the King, as that eve wore  
 on,  
 Was playing at the chess.

And the King said, (for he thought to jest  
 And soothe the Queen thereby;) —  
 "In a book 't is writ that this same year  
 A King shall in Scotland die.

"And I have pondered the matter o'er,  
 And this have I found, Sir Hugh,—  
 There are but two Kings on Scottish  
 ground,  
 And those Kings are I and you.

"And I have a wife and a newborn heir,  
 And you are yourself alone;  
 So stand you stark at my side with me  
 To guard our double throne.

"For here sit I and my wife and child,  
 As well your heart shall approve,  
 In full surrender and soothfastness,  
 Beneath your Kingdom of Love."

And the Knight laughed, and the Queen  
 too smiled:

But I knew her heavy thought,  
 And I strove to find in the good King's jest  
 What cheer might thence be wrought.

And I said, "My Liege, for the Queen's  
 dear love  
 Now sing the song that of old  
 You made, when a captive Prince you lay,  
 And the nightingale sang sweet on the  
 spray,  
 In Windsor's castle-hold."

Then he smiled the smile I knew so well  
 When he thought to please the Queen;  
 The smile which under all bitter frowns  
 Of hate that rose between,  
 For ever dwelt at the poet's heart  
 Like the bird of love unseen.

And he kissed her hand and took his harp,  
 And the music sweetly rang;  
 And when the song burst forth, it seemed  
 'T was the nightingale that sang.

*"Worship, ye lovers, on this May:  
 Of bliss your kalends are begun:  
 Sing with us, Away, Winter, away!  
 Come, Summer, the sweet season and  
 sun!  
 Awake for shame,—your heaven is  
 won,—  
 And amorous your heads lift all:  
 Thank Love, that you to his grace doth  
 call!"*

But when he bent to the Queen, and sang  
 The speech whose praise was hers,  
 It seemed his voice was the voice of the  
 Spring  
 And the voice of the bygone years.

*"The fairest and the freshest flower  
 That ever I saw before that hour,  
 The which o' the sudden made to start  
 The blood of my body to my heart.*

\* \* \* \*

*Ah sweet, are ye a worldly creature  
 Or heavenly thing in form of nature?"*

And the song was long, and richly stored  
 With wonder and beauteous things;  
 And the harp was tuned to every change  
 Of minstrel ministerings;  
 But when he spoke of the Queen at the  
 last,  
 Its strings were his own heart-strings.

*"Unworthy but only of her grace,  
 Upon Love's rock that's easy and sure,  
 In querdon of all my love's space  
 She took me her humble creature.  
 Thus fell my blissful aventure  
 In youth of love that from day to day  
 Flowereth aye new, and further I say.*

*"To reckon all the circumstance  
 As it happened when lessen gan my sore,  
 Of my rancor and woful chance,  
 It were too long,—I have done therefor.  
 And of this flower I say no more  
 But unto my help her heart hath tended  
 And even from death her man defended."*

*"Aye, even from death," to myself I said;  
 For I thought of the day when she  
 Had borne him the news, at Roxbro' siege,  
 Of the fell confederacy.*

But Death even then took aim as he sang  
 With an arrow deadly bright;  
 And the grinning skull lurked grimly aloof,  
 And the wings were spread far over the  
 roof  
 More dark than the winter night.

Yet truly along the amorous song  
 Of Love's high pomp and state,  
 There were words of Fortune's trackless  
 doom  
 And the dreadful face of Fate.

And oft have I heard again in dreams  
The voice of dire appeal  
In which the King then sang of the pit  
That is under Fortune's wheel.

*"And under the wheel beheld I there  
An ugly Pit as deep as hell,  
That to behold I quaked for fear:  
And this I heard, that who therein fell  
Came no more up, tidings to tell:  
Whereat, astound of the fearful sight,  
I wist not what to do for fright."*

And oft has my thought called up again  
These words of the changeful song:—  
*"Wist thou thy pain and thy travail  
To come, well mightst thou weep and  
wail!"*

And our wail, O God! is long.

But the song's end was all of his love;  
And well his heart was grac'd  
With her smiling lips and her tear-bright  
eyes  
As his arm went round her waist.

And on the swell of her long fair throat  
Close clung the necklet-chain  
As he bent her pearl-tir'd head aside,  
And in the warmth of his love and pride  
He kissed her lips full fain.

And her true face was a rosy red,  
The very red of the rose  
That, couched on the happy garden-bed,  
In the summer sunlight glows.

And all the wondrous things of love  
That sang so sweet through the song  
Were in the look that met in their eyes,  
And the look was deep and long.

'T was then a knock came at the outer  
gate,  
And the usher sought the King.  
"The woman you met by the Scottish Sea,  
My Liege, would tell you a thing;  
And she says that her present need for  
speech  
Will bear no gainsaying."

And the King said: "The hour is late;  
To-morrow will serve, I ween."  
Then he charged the usher strictly, and  
said:

"No word of this to the Queen."

But the usher came again to the King.  
"Shall I call her back?" quoth he:  
"For as she went on her way, she cried,  
'Woe! Woe! then the thing must be!'"

And the King paused, but he did not speak.  
Then he called for the Voidee-cup:  
And as we heard the twelfth hour strike,  
There by true lips and false lips alike  
Was the draught of trust drained up.

So with reverence meet to King and Queen,  
To bed went all from the board;  
And the last to leave of the courtly train  
Was Robert Stuart the chamberlain  
Who had sold his sovereign lord.

And all the locks of the chamber door  
Had the traitor riven and brast;  
And that Fate might win sure way from  
afar,  
He had drawn out every bolt and bar  
That made the entrance fast.

And now at midnight he stole his way  
To the moat of the outer wall,  
And laid strong hurdles closely across  
Where the traitors' tread should fall.

But we that were the Queen's bower-maids  
Alone were left behind;  
And with heed we drew the curtains close  
Against the winter wind.

And now that all was still through the  
hall,  
More clearly we heard the rain  
That clamored ever against the glass  
And the boughs that beat on the pane.

But the fire was bright in the ingle-nook,  
And through empty space around  
The shadows cast on the arras'd wall  
'Mid the pictured kings stood sudden and  
tall  
Like spectres sprung from the ground.

And the bed was dight in a deep alcove;  
And as he stood by the fire  
The king was still in talk with the Queen  
While he doffed his goodly attire.

And the song had brought the image back  
Of many a bygone year;  
And many a loving word they said  
With hand in hand and head laid to head;  
And none of us went anear.

But Love was weeping outside the house,  
A child in the piteous rain;  
And as he watched the arrow of Death,  
He wailed for his own shafts close in the  
sheath  
That never should fly again.

And now beneath the window arose  
A wild voice suddenly:  
And the King reared straight, but the  
Queen fell back  
As for bitter due to dree;  
And all of us knew the woman's voice  
Who spoke by the Scottish Sea.

"O King," she cried, "in an evil hour  
They drove me from thy gate;  
And yet my voice must rise to thine ears;  
But alas! it comes too late!"

"Last night at mid-watch, by Aberdour,  
When the moon was dead in the skies,  
O King, in a death-light of thine own  
I saw thy shape arise.

"And in full season, as erst I said,  
The doom had gained its growth;  
And the shroud had risen above thy neck  
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

"And no moon woke, but the pale dawn  
broke,  
And still thy soul stood there;  
And I thought its silence cried to my soul  
As the first rays crowned its hair.

"Since then have I journeyed fast and faint  
In very despite of Fate,  
Lest Hope might still be found in God's  
will:

But they drove me from thy gate.

"For every man on God's ground, O King,  
His death grows up from his birth  
In a shadow-plant perpetually;  
And thine towers high, a black yew-tree,  
O'er the Charterhouse of Perth!"

That room was built far out from the  
house:

And none but we in the room  
Might hear the voice that rose beneath,  
Nor the tread of the coming doom.

For now there came a torchlight-glare,  
And a clang of arms there came;  
And not a soul in that space but thought  
Of the foe Sir Robert Græme.

Yea, from the country of the Wild Scots,  
O'er mountain, valley, and glen,  
He had brought with him in murderous  
league  
Three hundred armèd men.

The King knew all in an instant's flash,  
And like a King did he stand;  
But there was no armor in all the room,  
Nor weapon lay to his hand.

And all we women flew to the door  
And thought to have made it fast;  
But the bolts were gone and the bars were  
gone  
And the locks were riven and brast.

And he caught the pale pale Queen in his  
arms  
As the iron footsteps fell,—  
Then loosed her, standing alone, and said,  
"Our bliss was our farewell!"

And 'twixt his lips he murmured a prayer,  
And he crossed his brow and breast;  
And proudly in royal hardihood  
Even so with folded arms he stood,—  
The prize of the bloody quest.

Then on me leaped the Queen like a deer:—  
"O Catherine, help!" she cried.  
And low at his feet we clasped his knees  
Together side by side.  
"Oh! even a King, for his people's sake,  
From treasonous death must hide!"

"For her sake most!" I cried, and I marked  
The pang that my words could wring.  
And the iron tongs from the chimney-nook  
I snatched and held to the King:—  
"Wrench up the plank! and the vault be-  
neath  
Shall yield safe harboring."

With brows low-bent, from my eager hand  
The heavy heft did he take;  
And the plank at his feet he wrenched and  
tore;  
And as he frowned through the open floor,  
Again I said, "For her sake!"

Then he cried to the Queen, "God's will  
be done!"

For her hands were clasped in prayer.  
And down he sprang to the inner crypt;  
And straight we closed the plank he had  
ripp'd  
And toiled to smoothe it fair.

(Alas! in that vault a gap once was  
Wherethro' the King might have fled;  
But three days since close-walled had it  
been  
By his will; for the ball would roll therein  
When without at the palm he play'd.)

Then the Queen cried, "Catherine, keep  
the door  
And I to this will suffice!"  
At her word I rose all dazed to my feet,  
And my heart was fire and ice.

And louder ever the voices grew,  
And the tramp of men in mail;  
Until to my brain it seemed to be  
As though I tossed on a ship at sea  
In the teeth of a crashing gale.

Then back I flew to the rest; and hard  
We strove with sinews knit  
To force the table against the door;  
But we might not compass it.

Then my wild gaze sped far down the hall  
To the place of the hearthstone-sill;  
And the Queen bent ever above the floor,  
For the plank was rising still.

And now the rush was heard on the stair,  
And "God, what help?" was our cry.  
And was I frenzied or was I bold?  
I looked at each empty stanchion-hold,  
And no bar but my arm had I!

Like iron felt my arm, as through  
The staple I made it pass:—  
Alack! it was flesh and bone—no more!  
'T was Catherine Douglas sprang to the  
door,

But I fell back Kate Barlass.

With that they all thronged into the hall,  
Half dim to my failing ken;  
And the space that was but a void before  
Was a crowd of wrathful men.

Behind the door I had fall'n and lay,  
Yet my sense was wildly aware,  
And for all the pain of my shattered arm  
I never fainted there.

Even as I fell, my eyes were cast  
Where the King leaped down to the pit;  
And lo! the plank was smooth in its place,  
And the Queen stood far from it.

And under the litters and through the bed  
And within the presses all  
The traitors sought for the King, and  
pierced  
The arras around the wall.

And through the chamber they ramped and  
stormed  
Like lions loose in the lair,  
And scarce could trust to their very eyes,—  
For behold! no King was there.

Then one of them seized the Queen, and  
cried,—  
"Now tell us, where is thy lord?"  
And he held the sharp point over her heart:  
She drooped not her eyes nor did she start,  
But she answered never a word.

Then the sword half pierced the true true  
breast:  
But it was the Græme's own son  
Cried, "This is a woman,—we seek a man!"  
And away from her girdle-zone  
He struck the point of the murderous steel;  
And that foul deed was not done.

And forth flowed all the throng like a sea,  
And 't was empty space once more;  
And my eyes sought out the wounded Queen  
As I lay behind the door.

And I said: "Dear Lady, leave me here,  
For I cannot help you now;  
But fly while you may, and none shall reck  
Of my place here lying low."

And she said, "My Catherine, God help  
thee!"

Then she looked to the distant floor,  
And clasping her hands, "O God help him,"  
She sobbed, "for we can no more!"

But God He knows what help may mean,  
If it mean to live or to die;  
And what sore sorrow and mighty moan  
On earth it may cost ere yet a throne  
Be filled in His house on high.

And now the ladies fled with the Queen;  
And through the open door  
The night-wind wailed round the empty  
room  
And the rushes shook on the floor.

And the bed drooped low in the dark recess  
Whence the arras was rent away;  
And the firelight still shone over the space  
Where our hidden secret lay.

And the rain had ceased, and the moon-  
beams lit  
The window high in the wall,—  
Bright beams that on the plank that I  
knew  
Through the painted pane did fall  
And gleamed with the splendor of Scot-  
land's crown  
And shield armorial.

But then a great wind swépt up the skies,  
And the climbing moon fell back;  
And the royal blazon fled from the floor,  
And nought remained on its track;  
And high in the darkened window-pane  
The shield and the crown were black.

And what I say next I partly saw  
And partly I heard in sooth,  
And partly since from the murderers' lips  
The torture wrung the truth.

For now again came the armèd tread,  
And fast through the hall it fell;  
But the throng was less: and ere I saw,  
By the voice without I could tell  
That Robert Stuart had come with them  
Who knew that chamber well.

And over the space the Græme strode dark  
With his mantle round him flung;  
And in his eye was a flaming light  
But not a word on his tongue.

And Stuart held a torch to the floor,  
And he found the thing he sought;  
And they slashed the plank away with their  
swords;  
And O God! I fainted not!

And the traitor held his torch in the gap,  
All smoking and smouldering;  
And through the vapor and fire, beneath  
In the dark crypt's narrow ring,  
With a shout that pealed to the room's  
high roof  
They saw their naked King.

Half naked he stood, but stood as one  
Who yet could do and dare:  
With the crown, the King was stript away,—  
The Knight was reft of his battle-array,—  
But still the Man was there.

From the rout then stepped a villain forth,—  
Sir John Hall was his name;  
With a knife unsheathed he leapt to the  
vault  
Beneath the torchlight-flame.

Of his person and stature was the King  
A man right manly strong,  
And mightily by the shoulder-blades  
His foe to his feet he flung.

Then the traitor's brother, Sir Thomas  
Hall,  
Sprang down to work his worst;  
And the King caught the second man by  
the neck  
And flung him above the first.

And he smote and trampled them under  
him;  
And a long month thence they bare  
All black their throats with the grip of his  
hands  
When the hangman's hand came there.

And sore he strove to have had their  
knives,  
But the sharp blades gashed his hands.  
Oh James! so armed, thou hadst battled  
there  
Till help had come of thy bands;  
And oh! once more thou hadst held our  
throne  
And ruled thy Scottish lands!

But while the King o'er his foes still raged  
With a heart that naught could tame,  
Another man sprang down to the crypt;  
And with his sword in his hand hard-  
gripp'd,  
There stood Sir Robert Græme.

(Now shame on the recreant traitor's heart  
Who durst not face his King  
Till the body unarmed was wearied out  
With two-fold combating!

Ah! well might the people sing and say,  
As oft ye have heard aright:—  
“O Robert Græme, O Robert Græme,  
Who slew our King, God give thee shame!”  
For he slew him not as a knight.)

And the naked King turned round at bay,  
But his strength had passed the goal,  
And he could but gasp:—“Mine hour is  
come;  
But oh! to succor thine own soul's doom,  
Let a priest now shrive my soul!”

And the traitor looked on the King's spent  
strength

And said:—“Have I kept my word?—  
Yea, King, the mortal pledge that I gave?  
No black friar's shrift thy soul shall save,  
But the shrift of this red sword!”

With that he smote his King through the  
breast;

And all they three in the pen  
Fell on him and stabbed and stabbed him  
there  
Like merciless murderous men.

Yet seemed it now that Sir Robert Græme,  
Ere the King's last breath was o'er,  
Turned sick at heart with the deadly sight  
And would have done no more.

But a cry came from the troop above:—  
“If him thou do not slay,  
The price of his life that thou dost spare  
Thy forfeit life shall pay!”

O God! what more did I hear or see,  
Or how should I tell the rest?  
But there at length our King lay slain  
With sixteen wounds in his breast.

O God! and now did a bell boom forth;  
And the murderers turned and fled;—  
Too late, too late, O God, did it sound!—  
And I heard the true men mustering round.  
And the cries and the coming tread.

But ere they came, to the black death-gap  
Somewise did I creep and steal;  
And lo! or ever I swooned away,  
Through the dusk I saw where the white  
face lay  
In the Pit of Fortune's Wheel.

And now, ye Scottish maids who have  
heard  
Dread things of the days grown old,—  
Even at the last, of true Queen Jane  
May somewhat yet be told,  
And how she dealt for her dear lord's sake  
Dire vengeance manifold.

T was in the Charterhouse of Perth,  
In the fair-lit Death-chapelle,  
That the slain King's corpse on bier was  
laid  
With chaunt and requiem-knell.

And all with royal wealth of balm  
Was the body purified;  
And none could trace on the brow and lips  
The death that he had died.

In his robes of state he lay asleep  
With orb and sceptre in hand;  
And by the crown he wore on his throne  
Was his kingly forehead spann'd.

And, girls, 't was a sweet sad thing to see  
 How the curling golden hair,  
 As in the day of the poet's youth,  
 From the King's crown clustered there.

And if all had come to pass in the brain  
 That throbbed beneath those curls,  
 Then Scots had said in the days to come  
 That this their soil was a different home  
 And a different Scotland, girls!

And the Queen sat by him night and day,  
 And oft she knelt in prayer,  
 All wan and pale in the widow's veil  
 That shrouded her shining hair.

And I had got good help of my hurt:  
 And only to me some sign  
 She made; and save the priests that were  
 there  
 No face would she see but mine.

And the month of March wore on apace;  
 And now fresh couriers fared  
 Still from the country of the Wild Scots  
 With news of the traitors snared.

And still as I told her day by day,  
 Her pallor changed to sight,  
 And the frost grew to a furnace-flame  
 That burnt her visage white.

And evermore as I brought her word,  
 She bent to her dead King James,  
 And in the cold ear with fire-drawn breath  
 She spoke the traitors' names.

But when the name of Sir Robert Græme  
 Was the one she had to give,  
 I ran to hold her up from the floor;  
 For the froth was on her lips, and sore  
 I feared that she could not live.

And the month of March wore nigh to its  
 end,  
 And still was the death-pall spread;  
 For she would not bury her slaughtered  
 lord  
 Till his slayers all were dead.

And now of their dooms dread tidings  
 came,  
 And of torments fierce and dire;  
 And nought she spake,—she had ceased  
 to speak,—  
 But her eyes were a soul on fire.

But when I told her the bitter end  
 Of the stern and just award,  
 She leaned o'er the bier, and thrice three  
 times  
 She kissed the lips of her lord.

And then she said,—“My King, they are  
 dead!”  
 And she knelt on the chapel-floor,  
 And whispered low with a strange proud  
 smile,—  
 “James, James, they suffered more!”

Last she stood up to her queenly height,  
 But she shook like an autumn leaf,  
 As though the fire wherein she burned  
 Then left her body, and all were turned  
 To winter of life-long grief.

And “O James!” she said,—“My James!”  
 she said,—  
 “Alas for the woful thing,  
 That a poet true and a friend of man,  
 In desperate days of bale and ban,  
 Should needs be born a King!”

# WILLIAM MORRIS

(1834-1896)

## THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

[1858.]

But, knowing now that they would have  
her speak,  
She threw her wet hair backward from her  
brow,  
Her hand close to her mouth touching her  
cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful  
blow,  
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but  
shame  
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek  
burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame  
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her  
head  
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame  
The tears dried quick; she stopped at last  
and said:  
'O knights and lords, it seems but little skill  
To talk of well-known things past now and  
dead.

'God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,  
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!  
Because you must be right such great  
lords—still

'Listen, suppose your time were come to  
die,  
And you were quite alone and very weak;  
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily  
'The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak  
Of river through your broad lands running  
well:  
Suppose a hush should come, then some one  
speak:

"One of these cloths is heaven, and one  
is hell,  
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they  
be,  
I will not tell you, you must somehow  
tell

"Of your own strength and mightiness;  
here, see!"  
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your  
eyes,  
At foot of your familiar bed to see

'A great God's angel standing, with such  
dyes,  
Not known on earth, on his great wings,  
and hands,  
Held out two ways, light from the inner  
skies  
'Showing him well, and making his com-  
mands  
Seem to be God's commands, moreover,  
too,  
Holding within his hands the cloths on  
wands;  
'And one of these strange choosing cloths  
was blue,  
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;  
No man could tell the better of the two.  
'After a shivering half-hour you said,  
"God help! heaven's colour, the blue;" and  
he said, "hell."  
Perhaps you then would roll upon your  
bed,  
'And cry to all good men that loved you  
well,  
"Ah Christ! if only I had known, known,  
known;"  
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,  
'Like wisest man how all things would be,  
moan,  
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,  
And yet fear much to die for what was  
sown.  
'Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,  
Whatever may have happened through  
these years,  
God knows I speak truth, saying that you  
lie.'  
Her voice was low at first, being full of  
tears,  
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and  
shrill,  
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,  
A ringing in their startled brains, until  
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice  
sunk,  
And her great eyes began again to fill,  
Though still she stood right up, and never  
shrunk,  
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!  
Whatever tears her full lips may have  
drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung  
her hair,  
Spoke out at last with no more trace of  
shame,  
With passionate twisting of her body there:

'It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came  
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-  
time'

This happened; when the heralds sung his  
name,

'"Son of King Ban of Benwick," seemed  
to chime  
Along with all the bells that rang that day,  
O'er the white roofs, with little change of  
rhyme.

'Christmas and whitened winter passed  
away,  
And over me the April sunshine came,  
Made very awful with black hail-clouds,  
yea

'And in the Summer I grew white with  
flame,  
And bowed my head down — Autumn, and  
the sick  
Sure knowledge things would never be the  
same,

'However often Spring might be most thick  
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and  
I grew  
Careless of most things, let the clock tick,  
tick,

'To my unhappy pulse, that beat right  
through  
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,  
And let my lips curl up at false or true,  
'Seemed cold and shallow without any  
cloud.  
Behold my judges, then the cloths were  
brought:  
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts  
would crowd,

'Belonging to the time ere I was bought  
By Arthur's great name and his little love,  
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

'That which I deemed would ever round me  
move

Glorifying all things; for a little word,  
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

'Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the  
Lord

Will that all folks should be quite happy  
and good?

I love God now a little, if this cord

'Were broken, once for all what striving  
could

Make me love anything in earth or heaven,  
So day by day it grew, as if one should

'Slip slowly down some path worn smooth  
and even,  
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;  
Yet still in slipping was there some small  
leaven

'Of stretched hands catching small stones  
by the way,  
Until one surely reached the sea at last,  
And felt strange new joy as the worn head  
lay

'Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all  
past  
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,  
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'er-  
cast

'In the lone sea, far off from any ships!  
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?  
No minute of that wild day ever slips

'From out my memory; I hear thrushes  
sing,  
And wheresoever I may be, straightway  
Thoughts of it all come up with most  
fresh sting;

'I was half mad with beauty on that day,  
And went without my ladies all alone,  
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

'I was right joyful of that wall of stone,  
That shut the flowers and trees up with  
the sky,  
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

'Yea right through to my heart, grown very  
shy  
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made  
me glad;  
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

'A little thing just then had made me mad;  
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,  
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

'Held out my long hand up against the blue,  
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd  
fingers,  
Thought that by rights one ought to see  
quite through,

'There, see you, where the soft still light  
yet lingers,  
Round by the edges; what should I have  
done,  
If this had joined with yellow spotted  
singers,

'And startling green drawn upward by the  
sun?  
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my  
hair,  
And trancedly stood watching the west  
wind run

'With faintest half-heard breathing sound  
—why there  
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;  
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

'Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the  
kiss  
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring  
day,  
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

'When both our mouths went wandering in  
one way,  
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;  
Our hands being left behind strained far  
away.

'Never within a yard of my bright sleeves  
Had Launcelot come before—and now; so  
nigh!  
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

'Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,  
Whatever happened on through all those  
years,  
God knows I speak truth, saying that you  
lie.

'Being such a lady could I weep these tears  
If this were true? A great queen such as I  
Having sinn'd this way, straight her con-  
science sears;

'And afterwards she liveth hatefully,  
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—  
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lov-  
ingly.

'Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps  
All through your frame, and trembles in  
your mouth?  
Remember in what grave your mother  
sleeps,

'Buried in some place far down in the  
south,  
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;  
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

'Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,  
I pray your pity! let me not scream out  
For ever after, when the shrill winds  
blow

'Through half your castle-locks! let me not  
shout  
For ever after in the winter night  
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout  
'Let not my rusting tears make your sword  
light!  
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!  
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

'So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I  
say,  
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men  
know  
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one  
day,

'One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*, for so  
All good knights held it after, saw—  
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage;  
though

'You, Gauwaine, held his word without a  
flaw,  
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my  
bed—  
Whose blood then pray you? is there any  
law

'To make a queen say why some spots of  
red  
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,  
"Your hands are white, lady, as when you  
wed,"

'"Where did you bleed?" and must I  
stammer out—"Nay,  
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend  
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there  
lay

'"A knife-point last night:" so must I  
defend  
The honour of the lady Guenevere?  
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should  
end

'This very day, and you were judges here  
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce  
When Launcelot stood by him? what white  
fear

'Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did  
dance,  
His side sink in? as my knight cried and  
said,  
"Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!"

'"Setter of traps, I pray you guard your  
head,  
By God I am so glad to fight with you,  
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels  
lead

'"For driving weight; hurrah now! draw  
and do,  
For all my wounds are moving in my  
breast,  
And I am getting mad with waiting so."

'He struck his hands together o'er the  
beast,  
Who fell down flat, and groveld' at his  
feet,  
And groan'd at being slain so young—"at  
least."

'My knight said, "Rise you, sir, who are so fleet

At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,  
My left side all uncovered!" then I weet,

'Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight

Upon his knave's face; not until just then  
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

'Along the lists look to my stake and pen  
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh  
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

'The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;

Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,  
And traversed warily, and ever high

'And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight

Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,  
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

'Except a spout of blood on the hot land;  
For it was hottest summer; and I know  
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should stand,

'And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,

Yards above my head; thus these matters went;

Which things were only warnings of the woe

'That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,

For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;

Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

'With all this wickedness; say no rash word

Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes, Wept all away to grey, may bring some sword

'To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,

Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;  
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

'Yea also at my full heart's strong command,

See through my long throat how the words go up

In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

'The shadow lies like wine within a cup  
Of marvellously colour'd gold; yea now

This little wind is rising, look you up,

'And wonder how the light is falling so  
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,  
When you have looked a little on my brow,

'To say this thing is vile? or will you care  
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,  
When you can see my face with no lie there

'For ever? am I not a gracious proof—  
"But in your chamber Launcelot was found"—

Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

'When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:

"O true as steel come now and talk with me,

I love to see your step upon the ground

'"Unwavering, also well I love to see  
That gracious smile light up your face,  
and hear

Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

'"The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear

To me in everything, come here to-night,  
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

'"If you come not, I fear this time I might

Get thinking over much of times gone by,  
When I was young, and green hope was in sight;

'"For no man cares now to know why I sigh;

And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,

Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

'"So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs

To see you, Launcelot; that we may be Like children once again, free from all wrongs

'"Just for one night." Did he not come to me?

What thing could keep true Launcelot away  
If I said "come"? there was one less than three

'In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;

Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,

Because a bawling broke our dream up,  
yea

'I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,  
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;  
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,  
'And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile  
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head,  
And made me dizzier; till within a while  
'My maids were all about me, and my head  
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away  
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—  
'By God! I will not tell you more to-day,  
Judge any way you will — what matters it?  
You know quite well the story of that fray,  
'How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the mad fit  
That caught up Gauwaine — all, all, verily,  
But just that which would save me; these things fit.  
'Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,  
Whatever may have happen'd these long years,  
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!  
'All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears.'  
She would not speak another word, but stood  
Turn'd sideways; listening, like a man who hears  
His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood  
Of his foes' lances. She lean'd eagerly,  
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could  
At last hear something really; joyfully  
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed  
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,  
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

#### THE CHAPEL IN LYONESS

[First published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, September 1856. Reprinted 1858.]

SIR OZANA LE CURE HARDY. SIR GALAHAD.  
SIR BORS DE GANYS

#### SIR OZANA

ALL day long and every day,  
From Christmas-Eve to Whit-Sunday,  
Within that Chapel-aisle I lay,  
And no man came a-near.

Naked to the waist was I,  
And deep within my breast did lie,  
Though no man any blood could spy,  
The truncheon of a spear.

No meat did ever pass my lips.  
Those days — (Alas! the sunlight slips  
From off the gilded parclose, dips,  
And night comes on apace.)

My arms lay back behind my head;  
Over my raised-up knees was spread  
A samite cloth of white and red;  
A rose lay on my face.

Many a time I tried to shout;  
But as in dream of battle-rout,  
My frozen speech would not well out;  
I could not even weep.

With inward sigh I see the sun  
Fade off the pillars one by one,  
My heart faints when the day is done,  
Because I cannot sleep.

Sometimes strange thoughts pass through  
my head;  
Not like a tomb is this my bed,  
Yet oft I think that I am dead;  
That round my tomb is writ,

'Ozana of the hardy heart,  
Knight of the Table Round,  
Pray for his soul, lords, of your part;  
A true knight he was found.'

Ah! me, I cannot fathom it. [He sleeps.]

#### SIR GALAHAD

All day long and every day,  
Till his madness pass'd away,  
I watch'd Ozana as he lay  
Within the gilded screen.

All my singing moved him not;  
As I sung my heart grew hot,  
With the thought of Launcelot  
Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space  
From out the chapel, bathed my face  
In the stream that runs apace  
By the churchyard wall.

There I pluck'd a faint wild rose,  
Hard by where the linden grows  
Sighing over silver rows  
Of the lilies tall.

I laid the flower across his mouth;  
The sparkling drops seem'd good for  
drouth;  
He smiled, turn'd round toward the south,  
Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west:  
He drew the covering from his breast,  
Against his heart that hair he prest;  
Death him soon will bless.

## SIR BORS

I enter'd by the western door;  
I saw a knight's helm lying there:  
I raised my eyes from off the floor,  
And caught the gleaming of his hair.  
  
I stept full softly up to him;  
I laid my chin upon his head;  
I felt him smile; my eyes did swim,  
I was so glad he was not dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low,  
'There comes no sleep nor any love.'  
But Galahad stoop'd and kiss'd his brow:  
He shiver'd; I saw his pale lips move.

## SIR OZANA

There comes no sleep nor any love;  
Ah me! I shiver with delight.  
I am so weak I cannot move;  
God move me to thee, dear, to-night!  
Christ help! I have but little wit:  
My life went wrong; I see it writ,  
  
'Ozana of the hardy heart,  
Knight of the Table Round,  
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;  
A good knight he was found.'  
Now I begin to fathom it.

[He dies.]

## SIR BORS

Galahad sits dreamily:  
What strange things may his eyes see,  
Great blue eyes fix'd full on me?  
On his soul, Lord, have mercy.

## SIR GALAHAD

Ozana, shall I pray for thee?  
Her cheek is laid to thine;  
No long time hence, also I see  
Thy wasted fingers twine

Within the tresses of her hair  
That shineth gloriously,  
Thinly outspread in the clear air  
Against the jasper sea.

## CONCERNING GEFFRAY TESTE NOIRE

[1858.]

AND if you meet the Canon of Chimay,  
As going to Ortaise you well may do,  
Greet him from John of Castel Neuf, and  
say,  
All that I tell you, for all this is true.

This Geffray Teste Noire was a Gascon  
thief,  
Who, under shadow of the English  
name,  
Pilled all such towns and countries as were  
lief  
To King Charles and St. Dennis; thought  
it blame

If anything escaped him; so my lord,  
The Duke of Berry, sent Sir John Bonne  
Lance,  
And other knights, good players with the  
sword,  
To check this thief, and give the land a  
chance.

Therefore we set our bastides round the  
tower  
That Geffray held, the strong thief I like a  
king,  
High perch'd upon the rock of Ventadour,  
Hopelessly strong by Christ! it was mid  
spring,

When first I joined the little army there  
With ten good spears; Auvergne is hot,  
each day  
We sweated armed before the barrier,  
Good feats of arms were done there  
often—eh?

Your brother was slain there? I mind me  
now,  
A right good man-at-arms, God pardon  
him!  
I think 'twas Geffray smote him on the  
brow  
With some spiked axe, and while he tot-  
ter'd, dim

About the eyes, the spear of Alleyne Roux  
Slipped through his camaille and his  
throat; well, well!  
Alleyne is paid now; your name Alleyne  
too?  
Mary! how strange—but this tale I  
would tell—

For spite of all our bastides, damned  
Blackhead  
Would ride abroad whene'er he chose to  
ride,  
We could not stop him; many a burgher  
bled  
Dear gold all around his girdle; far and  
wide

The villaynes dwelt in utter misery  
'Twixt us and thief Sir Geffray; hauled  
this way  
By Sir Bonne Lance at one time, he gone  
by,  
Down comes this Teste Noire on another  
day.

And therefore they dig up the stone, grind  
corn,  
Hew wood, draw water, yea, they lived,  
in short,  
As I said just now, utterly forlorn,  
Till this our knave and blackhead was  
outfought.

So Bonne Lance fretted, thinking of some  
trap  
Day after day, till on a time he said;  
'John of Newcastle, if we have good hap,  
We catch our thief in two days.' 'How?'  
I said.

'Why, Sir, to-day he rideth out again,  
Hoping to take well certain sumpter  
mules  
From Carcassonne, going with little train,  
Because, forsooth, he thinketh us mere  
fools;

'But if we set an ambush in some wood,  
He is but dead; so, Sir, take thirty spears  
To Verville forest, if it seem you good.'  
Then felt I like the horse in Job, who  
hears

The dancing trumpet sound, and we went  
forth;  
And my red lion on the spear-head  
flapped,  
As faster than the cool wind we rode North,  
Towards the wood of Verville; thus it  
happ'd.

We rode a soft space on that day while  
spies  
Got news about Sir Geffray; the red wine  
Under the road-side bush was clear; the  
flies,  
The dragon-flies I mind me most, did  
shine

In brighter arms than ever I put on;  
So—'Geffray,' said our spies, 'would pass  
that way  
Next day at sundown;' then he must be  
won;  
And so we enter'd Verville wood next  
day,

In the afternoon; through it the highway  
runs,  
'Twixt copses of green hazel, very thick,  
And underneath, with glimmering of suns,  
The primroses are happy; the dews lick

The soft green moss. 'Put cloths about  
your arms  
Lest they should glitter; surely they will  
go'

In a long thin line, watchful for alarms,  
With all their carriages of booty, so—

'Lay down my pennon in the grass — Lord  
God!

What have we lying here? will they be  
cold,

I wonder, being so bare, above the sod,  
Instead of under? This was a knight  
too, fold

'Lying on fold of ancient rusted mail;  
No plate at all, gold rowels to the spurs,  
And see the quiet gleam of turquoise pale  
Along the ceinture; but the long time  
blurs

'Even the tinder of his coat to nought,  
Except these scraps of leather; see how  
white  
The skull is, loose within the coif! He  
fought  
A good fight, maybe, ere he was slain  
quite.

'No armour on the legs too; strange in  
faith—  
A little skeleton for a knight though—ah!  
This one is bigger, truly without scathe  
His enemies escaped not—ribs driven  
out far,—

'That must have reach'd the heart, I doubt  
—how now,  
What say you, Aldovrand—a woman?  
why?

'Under the coif a gold wreath on the brow.  
Yea, see the hair not gone to powder, lie,

'Golden, no doubt, once—yea, and very  
small—  
This for a knight; but for a dame, my  
lord,  
These loose-hung bones seem shapely still,  
and tall,—  
Didst ever see a woman's bones, my  
lord?

Often, God help me! I remember when  
I was a simple boy, fifteen years old,  
The Jacquerie froze up the blood of men  
With their fell deeds, not fit now to be  
told:

God help again! we enter'd Beauvais town,  
Slaying them fast, whereto I help'd, mere  
boy

As I was then; we gentles cut them down,  
These burners and defilers, with great joy.

Reason for that, too, in the great church  
there

These fiends had lit a fire, that soon went  
out,

The church at Beauvais being so great and  
fair—

My father, who was by me, gave a shout

Between a beast's howl and a woman's scream,  
Then, panting, chuckled to me: 'John, look! look!  
Count the dames' skeletons!' From some bad dream  
Like a man just awaked, my father shook;  
  
And I, being faint with smelling the burnt bones,  
And very hot with fighting down the street,  
And sick of such a life, fell down, with groans  
My head went weakly nodding to my feet.—  
  
—An arrow had gone through her tender throat,  
And her right wrist was broken; then I saw  
The reason why she had on that war-coat,  
Their story came out clear without a flaw;  
  
For when he knew that they were being waylaid,  
He threw it over her, yea, hood and all;  
Whereby he was much hack'd, while they were stay'd  
By those their murderers; many an one did fall  
  
Beneath his arm, no doubt, so that he clear'd  
Their circle, bore his death-wound out of it;  
But as they rode, some archer least afeard  
Drew a strong bow, and thereby she was hit.  
  
Still as he rode he knew not she was dead,  
Thought her but fainted from her broken wrist,  
He bound with his great leathern belt—she bled?  
Who knows! he bled too, neither was there miss'd  
  
The beating of her heart, his heart beat well  
For both of them, till here, within this wood,  
He died scarce sorry; easy this to tell;  
After these years the flowers forgot their blood.—  
  
How could it be? never before that day,  
However much a soldier I might be,  
Could I look on a skeleton and say  
I care not for it, shudder not—now see,

Over those bones I sat and pored for hours,  
And thought, and dream'd, and still I scarce could see  
The small white bones that lay upon the flowers,  
But evermore I saw the lady; she With her dear gentle walking leading in,  
By a chain of silver twined about her wrists,  
Her loving knight, mounted and arm'd to win  
Great honour for her, fighting in the lists.  
  
O most pale face, that brings such joy and sorrow  
Into men's hearts—yea, too, so piercing sharp  
That joy is, that it marcheth nigh to sorrow  
For ever—like an overwinded harp.  
  
Your face must hurt me always; pray you now,  
Doth it not hurt you too? seemeth some pain  
To hold you always, pain to hold your brow  
So smooth, un wrinkled ever; yea again,  
  
Your long eyes where the lids seem like to drop,  
Would you not, lady, were they shut fast, feel  
Far merrier? there so high they will not stop,  
They are most sly to glide forth and to steal  
  
Into my heart; I kiss their soft lids there,  
And in green garden scarce can stop my lips  
From wandering on your face, but that your hair  
Falls down and tangles me, back my face slips.  
  
Or say your mouth—I saw you drink red wine  
Once at a feast; how slowly it sank in,  
As though you fear'd that some wild fate  
Might twine  
Within that cup, and slay you for a sin  
And when you talk your lips do arch and move  
In such wise that a language new I know  
Besides their sound; they quiver, too, with love  
When you are standing silent; know this, too,

I saw you kissing once, like a curved sword  
That bites with all its edge, did your lips  
lie,  
Curled gently, slowly, long time could  
afford  
For caught-up breathings; like a dying  
sigh

They gather'd up their lines and went  
away.  
And still kept twitching with a sort of  
smile,  
As likely to be weeping presently,—  
Your hands too—how I watch'd them  
all the while!

'Cry out St. Peter now,' quoth Aldovrand;  
I cried, 'St. Peter,' broke out from the  
wood  
With all my spears; we met them hand to  
hand,  
And shortly slew them; nathless, by the  
rood,

We caught not Blackhead then, or any  
day;  
Months after that he died at last in bed,  
From a wound pick'd up at a barrier-fray;  
That same year's end a steel bolt in the  
head,  
And much bad living kill'd Teste Noire at  
last;  
John Froissart knoweth he is dead by  
now,  
No doubt, but knoweth not this tale just  
past;  
Perchance then you can tell him what  
I show.

In my new castle, down beside the Eure,  
There is a little chapel of squared stone,  
Painted inside and out; in green nook pure  
There did I lay them, every wearied  
bone;

And over it they lay, with stone-white  
hands  
Clasped fast together, hair made bright  
with gold  
This Jaques Picard, known through many  
lands,  
Wrought cunningly; he's dead now—I  
am old.

### OLD LOVE

[1858.]

'You must be very old, Sir Giles,'  
I said; he said: 'Yea, very old,'  
Whereat the mournfullest of smiles  
Creased his dry skin with many a fold.  
They hammer'd out my basnet point  
Into a round salade,' he said,  
'The basnet being quite out of joint,  
Nathless the salade rasps my head.'

He gazed at the great fire awhile:  
'And you are getting old, Sir John,'  
(He said this with that cunning smile  
That was most sad;) 'we both wear on,

'Knights come to court and look at me,  
With eyebrows up, except my lord,  
And my dear lady, none I see  
That know the ways of my old sword.'

(My lady! at that word no pang  
Stopp'd all my blood.) 'But tell me,  
John,  
Is it quite true that pagans hang  
So thick about the east, that on

'The eastern sea no Venice flag  
Can fly unpaid for?' 'True,' I said,  
'And in such way the miscreants drag  
Christ's cross upon the ground, I dread

'That Constantine must fall this year.'  
Within my heart; 'These things are  
small;

This is not small, that things outwear  
I thought were made for ever, yea, all,

'All things go soon or late,' I said—  
I saw the duke in court next day;  
Just as before, his grand great head  
Above his gold robes dreaming lay,

Only his face was paler; there  
I saw his duchess sit by him;  
And she—she was changed more; her hair  
Before my eyes that used to swim,

And make me dizzy with great bliss  
Once, when I used to watch her sit—  
Her hair is bright still, yet it is  
As though some dust were thrown on it.

Her eyes are shallower, as though  
Some grey glass were behind; her brow  
And cheeks the straining bones show  
through,  
Are not so good for kissing now.

Her lips are drier now she is  
A great duke's wife these many years,  
They will not shudder with a kiss  
As once they did, being moist with tears.

Also her hands have lost that way  
Of clinging that they used to have;  
They look'd quite easy, as they lay  
Upon the silken cushions brave

With broidery of the apples green  
My Lord Duke bears upon his shield.  
Her face, alas! that I have seen  
Look fresher than an April field,

This is all gone now; gone also  
Her tender walking; when she walks  
She is most queenly I well know,  
And she is fair still: —as the stalks

Of faded summer-lilies are,  
So is she grown now unto me  
This spring-time, when the flowers star  
The meadows, birds sing wonderfully.

I warrant once she used to cling  
About his neck, and kiss'd him so,  
And then his coming step would ring  
Joy-bells for her,—some time ago.

Ah! sometimes like an idle dream  
That hinders true life overmuch,  
Sometimes like a lost heaven, these seem.  
This love is not so hard to smutch.

*She a belle!*  
THE GILLIFLOWER OF GOLD  
[1858.]

A GOLDEN gilliflower to-day  
I wore upon my helm alway,  
And won the prize of this tourney.  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

However well Sir Giles might sit,  
His sun was weak to wither it,  
Lord Miles's blood was dew on it:  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

Although my spear in splinters flew,  
From John's steel-coat my eye was true;  
I wheel'd about, and cried for you,  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

Yea, do not doubt my heart was good,  
Though my sword flew like rotten wood,  
To shout, although I scarcely stood,  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

My hand was steady too, to take  
My axe from round my neck, and break  
John's steel-coat up for my love's sake.  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

When I stood in my tent again,  
Arming afresh, I felt a pain  
Take hold of me, I was so fain—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

To hear: '*Honneur aux fils des preux!*'  
Right in my ears again, and shew  
The gilliflower blossom'd new.  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

The Sieur Guillaume against me came,  
His tabard bore three points of flame  
From a red heart: with little blame—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

Our tough spears crackled up like straw;  
He was the first to turn and draw  
His sword, that had nor speck nor flaw,—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

But I felt weaker than a maid,  
And my brain, dizzied and afraid,  
Within my helm a fierce tune play'd,—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

Until I thought of your dear head,  
Bow'd to the gilliflower bed,  
The yellow flowers stain'd with red;—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

Crash! how the swords met, '*giroflee!*'  
The fierce tune in my helm would play,  
*'La belle! la belle! jaune giroflee!'*  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

Once more the great swords met again,  
*'La belle! la belle!'* but who fell then?  
Le Sieur Guillaume, who struck down  
ten;—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

And as with mazed and unarm'd face,  
Toward my own crown and the Queen's  
place,  
They led me at a gentle pace—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

I almost saw your quiet head  
Bow'd o'er the gilliflower bed,  
The yellow flowers stain'd with red—  
*Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflee.*

## SHAMEFUL DEATH

[1858.]

THERE were four of us about that bed;  
The mass-priest knelt at the side,  
I and his mother stood at the head,  
Over his feet lay the bride;  
We were quite sure that he was dead,  
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,  
He did not die in the day,  
But in the morning twilight  
His spirit pass'd away,  
When neither sun nor moon was bright,  
And the trees were merely grey.

He was not slain with the sword,  
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,  
Yet spoke he never a word  
After he came in here;  
I cut away the cord  
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,  
For the recreants came behind,  
In a place where the hornbeams grow,  
A path right hard to find,  
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,  
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,  
When his arms were pinion'd fast,  
Sir John the knight of the Fen,  
Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,  
With knights threescore and ten,  
Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,  
And my hair is all turn'd grey,  
But I met Sir John of the Fen  
Long ago on a summer day,  
And am glad to think of the moment when  
I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,  
And my strength is mostly pass'd,  
But long ago I and my men,  
When the sky was overcast,  
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the  
fen,  
Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,  
I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,  
A good knight and a true,  
And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

### THE SAILING OF THE SWORD

[1858.]

Across the empty garden-beds,  
*When the Sword went out to sea;*  
I scarcely saw my sisters' heads  
Bowed each beside a tree.  
I could not see the castle leads,  
*When the Sword went out to sea.*

Alicia wore a scarlet gown,  
*When the Sword went out to sea,*  
But Ursula's was russet brown:  
For the mist we could not see  
The scarlet roofs of the good town,  
*When the Sword went out to sea.*

Green holly in Alicia's hand,  
*When the Sword went out to sea;*  
With sere oak-leaves did Ursula stand;  
O! yet alas for me!  
I did but bear a peel'd white wand,  
*When the Sword went out to sea.*

O, russet brown and scarlet bright,  
*When the Sword went out to sea,*  
My sisters wore; I wore but white:  
Red, brown, and white, are three;  
Three damozels; each had a knight,  
*When the Sword went out to sea.*

Sir Robert shouted loud, and said,  
*When the Sword went out to sea,*  
'Alicia, while I see thy head,  
What shall I bring for thee?'  
'O, my sweet lord, a ruby red.'  
*The Sword went out to sea.*

Sir Miles said, while the sails hung down,  
*When the Sword went out to sea,*  
'Oh, Ursula! while I see the town,  
What shall I bring for thee?'  
'Dear knight, bring back a falcon brown.'  
*The Sword went out to sea.*

But my Roland, no word he said  
*When the Sword went out to sea,*  
But only turn'd away his head,—  
A quick shriek came from me:  
'Come back, dear lord, to your white  
maid;—'  
*The Sword went out to sea.*

The hot sun bit the garden-beds,  
*When the Sword came back from sea;*  
Beneath an apple-tree our heads  
Stretched out toward the sea;  
Grey gleam'd the thirsty castle-leads,  
*When the Sword came back from sea.*  
Lord Robert brought a ruby red,  
*When the Sword came back from sea;*  
He kissed Alicia on the head:  
'I am come back to thee;  
'Tis time, sweet love, that we were wed,  
*Now the Sword is back from sea!*

Sir Miles he bore a falcon brown,  
*When the Sword came back from sea;*  
His arms went round tall Ursula's gown,—  
'What joy, O love, but thee?  
Let us be wed in the good town,  
*Now the Sword is back from sea!*  
My heart grew sick, no more afraid,  
*When the Sword came back from sea;*  
Upon the deck a tall white maid  
Sat on Lord Roland's knee;  
His chin was press'd upon her head,  
*When the Sword came back from sea!*

### THE WIND

[1858.]

AH! no; no, it is nothing, surely nothing  
at all,  
Only the wild-going wind round by the  
garden-wall,  
For the dawn just now is breaking, the  
wind beginning to fall.  
*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to*  
*find.*

So I will sit, and think and think of the  
days gone by,  
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs  
should cry,  
Making no noise at all while the flambeau  
burns awry.  
For my chair is heavy and carved, and  
with sweeping green behind  
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin  
out in the gusts of the wind;  
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep  
gash cut in the rind.  
*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to*  
*find.*

If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange will roll out far,  
And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a wizard's jar;  
And the dogs will howl for those who went last month to the war.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

So I will sit and think of love that is over and past,  
O! so long ago—yes, I will be quiet at last;  
Whether I like it or not, a grim half-sleep is cast

Over my worn old brains, that touches the roots of my heart,  
And above my half-shut eyes the blue roof gins to part,  
And show the blue spring sky, till I am ready to start  
From out of the green-hung chair; but something keeps me still,  
And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with her on the side of a hill,  
Dotted—for was it not spring?—with tufts of the daffodil.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted book in her hand;  
Her finger kept the place; I caught her, we both did stand  
Face to face, on the top of the highest hill in the land.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

I held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away from me,  
While the flush went out of her face as her head fell back on a tree,  
And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see;

And still I held to her arms till her shoulder touch'd my mail.  
Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should prevail,

And her hair went over my robe, like a gold flag over a sail.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd me on the brow,  
And then lay down on the grass, where the mark on the moss is now,  
And spread her arms out wide while I went down below.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro on the side of the hill,  
Till I gather'd and held in my arms great sheaves of the daffodil,  
And when I came again my Margaret lay there still.

I piled them high and high above her heaving breast,  
How they were caught and held in her loose ungirded vest!  
But one beneath her arm died, happy so to be prest!

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

Again I turn'd my back and went away for an hour;  
She said no word when I came again, so, flower by flower,  
I counted the daffodils over, and cast them languidly lower.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

*bad - why we*  
My dry hands shook and shook as the green gown show'd again,  
Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow with pain,  
And on to us both there fell from the sun-shower drops of rain.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?*  
*Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,*  
*Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.*

Alas! alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast,  
Blood lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest,  
Blood lay upon her arm where the flower had been prest.

I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out far,  
The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar;  
And then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone to the war.

I knew them by the arms that I was used  
to paint  
Upon their long thin shields; but the col-  
ours were all grown faint,  
And faint upon their banner was Olaf,  
king and saint.

*Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?  
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,  
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to  
find.*

### THE BLUE CLOSET

[1858.]

#### THE DAMOZELS

LADY ALICE, Lady Louise,  
Between the wash of the tumbling seas  
We are ready to sing, if so ye please;  
So lay your long hands on the keys;  
Sing, '*Laudate pueri.*'

*And ever the great bell overhead  
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,  
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the  
dead.*

#### LADY LOUISE

Sister, let the measure swell  
Not too loud; for you sing not well  
If you drown the faint boom of the bell;  
He is weary, so am I.

*And ever the chevron overhead  
Flapp'd on the banner of the dead;  
(Was he asleep, or was he dead?)*

#### LADY ALICE

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,  
Two damozels wearing purple and green,  
Four lone ladies dwelling here  
From day to day and year to year;  
And there is none to let us go;  
To break the locks of the doors below,  
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow;  
And when we die no man will know  
That we are dead; but they give us leave,  
Once every year on Christmas-eve,  
To sing in the Closet Blue one song;  
And we should be so long, so long.  
If we dared, in singing; for dream on  
dream,

They float on in a happy stream;  
Float from the gold strings, float from the  
keys,

Float from the open'd lips of Louise;  
But, alas! the sea-salt oozes through  
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue;  
*And ever the great bell overhead  
Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,  
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.*

[They sing all together]

How long ago was it, how long ago,  
He came to this tower with hands full of  
snow?

'Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down,'  
he said,  
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my  
head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran  
through my hair,  
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders  
and bare.

'I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,  
For my tears are all hidden deep under  
the seas;

'In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my  
tears,  
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old  
years;

'Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small  
and dry,  
I am so feeble now, would I might die.'

*And in truth the great bell overhead  
Left off his pealing for the dead,  
Perchance, because the wind was dead.*

Will he come back again, or is he dead?  
O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,  
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!  
Both his soul and his body to me are  
most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive  
Either body or spirit this wild Christm-  
eve.

*Through the floor shot up a lily red,  
With a patch of earth from the land of the  
dead,  
For he was strong in the land of the dead.*

What matter that his cheeks were pale,  
His kind kiss'd lips all grey?  
'O, love Louise, have you waited long?'  
'O, my lord Arthur, yea.'

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek  
Was stiff with frozen rime?  
His eyes were grown quite blue again,  
As in the happy time.

'O, love Louise, this is the key  
Of the happy golden land!  
O, sisters, cross the bridge with me,  
My eyes are full of sand.  
What matter that I cannot see,  
If ye take me by the hand?'

*And ever the great bell overhead,  
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the  
dead;  
For their song ceased, and they were dead.*

## THE TUNE OF SEVEN TOWERS

[1858.]

No ONE goes there now:  
For what is left to fetch away  
From the desolate battlements all arow,  
And the lead roof heavy and grey?  
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

No one walks there now;  
Except in the white moonlight  
The white ghosts walk in a row;  
If one could see it, an awful sight,—  
'Listen!' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

But none can see them now,  
Though they sit by the side of the moat,  
Feet half in the water, there in a row,  
Long hair in the wind afloat.  
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

If any will go to it now,  
He must go to it all alone,  
Its gates will not open to any row  
Of glittering spears—will you go alone?  
'Listen!' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

By my love go there now,  
To fetch me my coif away,  
My coif and my kirtle, with pearls arow,  
Oliver, go to-day!  
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

I am unhappy now,  
I cannot tell you why;  
If you go, the priests and I in a row  
Will pray that you may not die.  
'Listen!' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

If you will go for me now,  
I will kiss your mouth at last;  
[She sayeth inwardly.]  
(The graves stand grey in a row.)  
Oliver, hold me fast!  
'Therefore,' said fair Yoland of the flowers,  
'This is the tune of Seven Towers.'

## THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS

[1858.]

HAD she come all the way for this,  
To part at last without a kiss?  
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain  
That her own eyes might see him slain  
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,  
The stirrup touching either shoe,  
She rode astride as troopers do;  
With kirtle kilted to her knee,

To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;  
And the wet dripp'd from every tree  
Upon her head and heavy hair,  
And on her eyelids broad and fair;  
The tears and rain ran down her face.  
By fits and starts they rode apace,  
And very often was his place  
Far off from her; he had to ride  
Ahead, to see what might betide  
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes,

when  
There rose a murmuring from his men,  
Had to turn back with promises;  
Ah me! she had but little ease;  
And often for pure doubt and dread  
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head  
By the swift riding; while, for cold,  
Her slender fingers scarce could hold  
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,  
She felt the foot within her shoe  
Against the stirrup: all for this,  
To part at last without a kiss  
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,  
They saw across the only way  
That Judas, Godmar, and the three  
Red running lions dismally  
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which,  
In one straight line along the ditch,  
They counted thirty heads.

So then,  
While Robert turn'd round to his men,  
She saw at once the wretched end,  
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend  
Her coif the wrong way from her head,  
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:  
'Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,  
At Poictiers where we made them run  
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer.  
The Gascon frontier is so near,  
Nought after this.'

But, 'O,' she said,  
'My God! my God! I have to tread  
The long way back without you; then  
The court at Paris; those six men;  
The gratings of the Chatelet;  
The swift Seine on some rainy day  
Like this, and people standing by,  
And laughing, while my weak hands try  
To recollect how strong men swim.  
All this, or else a life with him,  
For which I should be damned at last,  
Would God that this next hour were past!'

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,  
'St. George for Marny!' cheerily;  
And laid his hand upon her rein.  
Alas! no man of all his train  
Gave back that cheery cry again;  
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast  
Upon his sword-hilts, some one cast  
About his neck a kerchief long,  
And bound him.

Then they went along  
To Godmar; who said: 'Now, Jehane,  
Your lover's life is on the wane  
So fast, that, if this very hour  
You yield not as my paramour,  
He will not see the rain leave off —  
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and  
scoff,  
Sir Robert, or I slay you now.'

She laid her hand upon her brow,  
Then gazed upon the palm, as though  
She thought her forehead bled, and — 'No.'  
She said, and turn'd her head away,  
As there were nothing else to say,  
And everything were settled: red  
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:  
'Jehane, on yonder hill there stands  
My castle, guarding well my lands:  
What hinders me from taking you,  
And doing that I list to do  
To your fair wilful body, while  
Your knight lies dead?'

A wicked smile  
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,  
A long way out she thrust her chin:  
'You know that I should strangle you  
While you were sleeping; or bite through  
Your throat, by God's help — ah!' she said,  
'Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!  
For in such wise they hem me in,  
I cannot choose but sin and sin,  
Whatever happens: yet I think  
They could not make me eat or drink,  
And so should I just reach my rest.'  
'Nay, if you do not my behest,  
O Jehane! though I love you well,'  
Said Godmar, 'would I fail to tell  
All that I know.' 'Foul lies,' she said.  
'Eh? lies my Jehane? by God's head,  
At Paris folks would deem them true!  
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,  
"Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!  
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!" —  
Eh — gag me Robert! — sweet my friend,  
This were indeed a piteous end  
For those long fingers, and long feet,  
And long neck, and smooth shoulders  
sweet;  
An end that few men would forget  
That saw it — So, an hour yet:  
Consider, Jehane, which to take  
Of life or death!'

So, scarce awake,  
Dismounting, did she leave that place,  
And totter some yards: with her face  
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,  
Her head on a wet heap of hay,  
And fell asleep: and while she slept,  
And did not dream, the minutes crept  
Round to the twelve again; but she,  
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,

And strangely childlike came, and said:  
'I will not.' Straightway Godmar's head,  
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd  
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.  
For Robert — both his eyes were dry,  
He could not weep, but gloomily  
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,  
His lips were firm; he tried once more  
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore  
And vain desire so tortured them,  
The poor grey lips, and now the hem  
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start  
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;  
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands  
Of silk and mail; with empty hands  
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,  
The long bright blade without a flaw  
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand  
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend  
Back Robert's head; she saw him send  
The thin steel-down; the blow told well,  
Right backward the knight Robert fell,  
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,  
Unwitting, as I deem: so then  
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,  
Who ran, some five or six, and beat  
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:  
'So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!  
Take note, my lady, that your way  
Lies backward to the Chatelet!'  
She shook her head and gazed awhile  
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,  
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had  
Beside the haystack in the floods.

#### TWO RED ROSES ACROSS THE MOON

[1858.]

THERE was a lady lived in a hall,  
Large in the eyes, and slim and tall;  
And ever she sung from noon to noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

There was a knight came riding by  
In early spring, when the roads were dry;  
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,  
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;  
And left that lady singing at noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,  
And the scarlet and blue had got to be  
met,  
He rode on the spur till the next warm  
noon: —  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

But the battle was scatter'd from hill to  
hill,  
From the windmill to the watermill;  
And he said to himself, as it near'd the  
noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

You scarce could see for the scarlet and  
blue,  
A golden helm or a golden shoe;  
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the  
noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon!*

Verily then the gold bore through  
The huddled spears of the scarlet and  
blue;  
And they cried, as they cut them down at  
the noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon!*

I trow he stopp'd when he rode again  
By the hall, though draggled sore with  
the rain;  
And his lips were pinch'd to kiss at the  
noon  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

Under the may she stoop'd to the crown,  
All was gold, there was nothing of brown;  
And the horns blew up in the hall at  
noon,  
*Two red roses across the moon.*

### PRAISE OF MY LADY

[1858.]

My lady seems of ivory  
Forehead, straight nose, and cheeks that be  
Hollow'd a little mournfully.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Her forehead, overshadow'd much  
By bows of hair, has a wave such  
As God was good to make for me.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Not greatly long my lady's hair,  
Nor yet with yellow colour fair.  
But thick and crisped wonderfully:  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Heavy to make the pale face sad,  
And dark, but dead as though it had  
Been forged by God most wonderfully  
*— Beata mea Domina! —*

Of some strange metal, thread by thread,  
To stand out from my lady's head,  
Not moving much to tangle me.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Beneath her brows the lids fall slow,  
The lashes a clear shadow throw  
Where I would wish my lips to be.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Her great eyes, standing far apart,  
Draw up some memory from her heart,  
And gaze out very mournfully;  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

So beautiful and kind they are,  
But most times looking out afar,  
Waiting for something, not for me.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

I wonder if the lashes long  
Are those that do her bright eyes wrong,  
For always half tears seem to be  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

Lurking below the underlid,  
Darkening the place where they lie hid —  
If they should rise and flow for me!  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Her full lips being made to kiss,  
Curl'd up and pensive each one is;  
This makes me faint to stand and see.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Her lips are not contented now,  
Because the hours pass so slow  
Towards a sweet time: (pray for me),  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

Nay, hold thy peace! for who can tell;  
But this at least I know full well,  
Her lips are parted longingly,  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

So passionate and swift to move,  
To pluck at any flying love,  
That I grow faint to stand and see.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Yea! there beneath them is her chin,  
So fine and round, it were a sin  
To feel no weaker when I see  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

God's dealings; for with so much care  
And troubrous, faint lines wrought in  
there,  
He finishes her face for me.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

Of her long neck what shall I say?  
What things about her body's sway,  
Like a knight's pennon or slim tree  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

Set gently waving in the wind;  
Or her long hands that I may find  
On some day sweet to move o'er me?  
*Beata mea Domina!*

God pity me though, if I miss'd  
The telling, how along her wrist  
The veins creep, dying languidly  
— *Beata mea Domina! —*

Inside her tender palm and thin.  
Now give me pardon, dear, wherein  
My voice is weak and vexes thee.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

All men that see her any time,  
I charge you straightly in this rhyme,  
What, and wherever you may be,  
—*Beata mea Domina!* —

To kneel before her; as for me,  
I choke and grow quite faint to see  
My lady moving graciously.  
*Beata mea Domina!*

### SUMMER DAWN

[First published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, October 1856. Reprinted 1858.]

PRAY but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,  
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.  
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,  
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the cloud-bars,  
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:  
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold  
Waits to float through them along with the sun.  
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,  
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold  
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;  
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,  
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.  
Speak but one word to me over the corn,  
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

### THE EARTHLY PARADISE

[1868-1870.]

#### PROLOGUE

*Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,*  
*I cannot ease the burden of your fears,*  
*Or make quick-coming death a little thing,*  
*Or bring again the pleasure of past years,*  
*Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,*  
*Or hope again for aught that I can say,*  
*The idle singer of an empty day.*

*But rather, when aweary of your mirth,*  
*From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,*  
*And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,*

*Grudge every minute as it passes by,*  
*Made the more mindful that the sweet days die,—*

*Remember me a little then, I pray,*  
*The idle singer of an empty day.*

*The heavy trouble, the bewildering care*  
*That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,*

*These idle verses have no power to bear;*  
*So let me sing of names remembered,*  
*Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,*  
*Or long time take their memory quite away*  
*From us poor singers of an empty day.*

*Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,*  
*Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?*

*Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme*  
*Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,*  
*Telling a tale not too importunate*  
*To those who in the sleepy region stay,*  
*Lulled by the singer of an empty day.*

*Folk say, a wizard to a northern king*  
*At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,*

*That through one window men beheld the spring,*

*And through another saw the summer glow,*  
*And through a third the fruited vines arow,*  
*While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,*  
*Piped the drear wind of that December day.*

*So with this Earthly Paradise it is,*  
*If ye will read aright and pardon me,*  
*Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss*

*Midmost the beating of the steely sea,*  
*Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;*

*Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,*

*Not the poor singer of an empty day.*

#### INTRODUCTION

*Forget six counties overhung with smoke,*  
*Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,*  
*Forget the spreading of the hideous town;*  
*Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,*

*And dream of London, small, and white,*  
*and clean,*

*The clear Thames bordered by its gardens green;*

*Think that below bridge the green lapping waves*

*Smite some few keels that bear Levantine staves*

*Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,*

*And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,*

*His earthly paradise is fellowship, which he found by looking for an earthly paradise on this earth.*

And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,  
 Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,  
 And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of  
     Guienne;  
 While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey  
     Chaucer's pen  
 Moves over bills of lading,— mid such  
     times  
 Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my  
     rhymes.

## THE PROUD KING

## ARGUMENT

[A certain king, blinded by pride, thought that he was something more than man, if not equal to God; but such a judgment fell on him that none knew him for king, and he suffered many things, till in the end, humbling himself, he regained his kingdom and honor.]

I

In a far country that I cannot name,  
 And on a year long ages passed away,  
 A king there dwelt, in rest and ease and  
     fame,  
 And richer than the emperor is to-day:  
 The very thought of what this man might  
     say  
 From dusk to dawn kept many a lord  
     awake,  
 For fear of him did many a great man  
     quake.

Young was he when he first sat on the  
     throne,  
 And he was wedded to a noble wife,  
 But at the dais must he sit alone,  
 Nor durst a man speak to him for his life,  
 Except with leave: naught knew he change  
     or strife,  
 But that the years passed silently away,  
 And in his black beard gathered specks of  
     gray.

Now so it chanced, upon a May morning,  
 Wakeful he lay when yet low was the sun,  
 Looking distraught at many a royal thing,  
 And counting up his titles one by one,  
 And thinking much of things that he had  
     done;  
 For full of life he felt, and hale and strong,  
 And knew that none durst say when he  
     did wrong.

For no man now could give him dread or  
     doubt,  
 The land was 'neath his sceptre far and  
     wide,  
 And at his beck would well-armed myriads  
     shout.  
 Then swelled his vain, unthinking heart  
     with pride,  
 Until at last he raised him up and cried,  
 'What need have I for temple or for priest?  
 Am I not God, whiles that I live at least?'

And yet withal that dead his fathers were,  
 He needs must think that quick the years  
     pass by;  
 But he, who seldom yet had seen Death  
     near  
 Or heard his name, said, 'Still I may not  
     die,  
 Though underneath the earth my fathers  
     lie;  
 My sire indeed was called a mighty king,  
     Yet, in regard of mine, a little thing

'His kingdom was; moreover his grandsire  
 To him was but a prince of narrow lands,  
 Whose father, though to things he did aspire  
 Beyond most men, a great knight of his  
     hands,

Yet ruled some little town where now  
     there stands  
 The kennel of my dogs; then may not I  
 Rise higher yet, nor like poor wretches die?

'Since up the ladder ever we have gone  
 Step after step, nor fallen back again;  
 And there are tales of people who have  
     won

A life enduring, without care or pain,  
 Or any man to make their wishes vain:  
 Perchance this prize unwitting now I hold;  
 For times change fast, the world is waxen  
     old.'

So mid these thoughts once more he fell  
     asleep,  
 And when he woke again, high was the  
     sun;  
 Then quickly from his gold bed did he leap,  
 And of his former thoughts remembered  
     none,  
 But said, 'To-day through green woods will  
     we run,  
 Nor shall to-day be worse than yesterday,  
 But better it may be, for game and play.'

So for the hunt was he apparellèd,  
 And forth he rode with heart right well at  
     ease;  
 And many a strong, deep-chested hound  
     they led  
 Over the dewy grass betwixt the trees,  
 And fair white horses fit for the white  
     knees  
 Of her the ancients fabled rides anights  
 Betwixt the setting and the rising lights.

Now following up a mighty hart and swift  
 The king rode long upon that morning-  
     tide;  
 And since his horse was worth a kingdom's  
     gift,  
 It chanced him all his servants to outride,  
 Until unto a shaded river-side  
 He came alone at hottest of the sun,  
 When all the freshness of the day was done

Dismounting there, and seeing so far adown  
The red-finn'd fishes o'er the gravel play,  
It seemed that moment worth his royal  
crown

To hide there from the burning of the day,  
Wherefore he did off all his rich array,  
And tied his horse unto a neighboring tree,  
And in the water sported leisurely.

But when he was fulfilled of this delight  
He gat him to the bank well satisfied,  
And thought to do on him his raiment  
bright

And homeward to his royal house to ride;  
But 'mazed and angry, looking far and  
wide,  
Naught saw he of his horse and rich attire,  
And 'gainst the thief 'gan threaten ven-  
geance dire.

But little help his fury was to him,  
So lustily he 'gan to shout and cry.  
None answered; still the lazy chub did  
swim  
By inches 'gainst the stream; away did fly  
The small pied bird, but nathless stayed  
anigh,  
And o'er the stream still plied his fluttering  
trade,  
Of such a helpless man not much afraid.

Weary of crying in that lonely place,  
He ceased at last, and thinking what to do,  
E'en as he was, up stream he set his face,  
Since not far off a certain house he knew  
Where dwelt his ranger, a lord leal and  
true,  
Who many a bounty at his hands had had,  
And now to do him ease would be right  
glad.

Thither he hastened on; and as he went  
The hot sun sorely burned his naked skin,  
The whiles he thought, 'When he to me  
has lent

Fine raiment, and at ease I sit within  
His coolest chamber clad in linen thin,  
And drinking wine, the best that he has got,  
I shall forget this troublous day and hot.'

Now note that while he thus was on his  
way,  
And still his people for their master sought,  
There met them one who in the king's  
array

Bestrode his very horse, and as they thought  
Was none but he in good time to them  
brought,  
Therefore they hailed him king, and so all  
rode

From out the forest to his fair abode.  
And there in royal guise he sat at meat,  
Served, as his wont was, 'neath the canopy,  
And there the hounds fawned round about  
his feet,

And there that city's elders did he see,  
And with his lords took counsel what  
should be;

And there at supper when the day waxed  
dim  
The queen within his chamber greeted him.

II  
Leave we him there; for to the ranger's  
gate

The other came, and on the horn he blew,  
Till peered the wary porter through the  
grate

To see if he, perchance, the blower knew,  
Before he should the wicket-gate undo;  
But when he saw him standing there, he  
cried,  
'What dost thou, friend, to show us all  
thine hide?

'We list not buy to-day or flesh or fell;  
Go home and get thyself a shirt at least,  
If thou wouldst aught, for saith our vicar  
well

That God hath given clothes e'en to the  
beast.'

Therewith he turned to go; but, as he  
ceased,

The king cried out, 'Open, O foolish man!  
I am thy lord and king, Jovinian.'

'Go now, and tell thy master I am here  
Desiring food and clothes, and in this  
plight,

And then hereafter need'st thou have no  
fear,

Because thou didst not know me at first  
sight.'

'Yea, yea, I am but dreaming in the night,'  
The carle said, 'and I bid thee, friend, to  
dream:  
Come through! here is no gate, it doth but  
seem.'

With that his visage vanished from the  
grate;

But when the king now found himself  
alone,

He hurled himself against the mighty gate,  
And beat upon it madly with a stone,  
Half wondering, midst his rage, how any  
one

Could live, if longed-for things he chanced  
to lack;

But midst all this, at last the gate flew back,

And there the porter stood, brown-bill in  
hand,

And said, 'Ah, fool, thou makest this ado,  
Wishing before my lord's high seat to  
stand;

Thou shalt be gladder soon hereby to go,  
Or surely naught of handy blows I know.  
Come, willy nilly, thou shalt tell this tale  
Unto my lord, if aught it may avail.'

With that his staff he handled, as if he  
Would smite the king, and said, 'Get on  
before!

Saint Mary! now thou goest full leisurely,  
Who erewhile fain wouldest batter down the  
door.

See now, if ere this matter is passed o'er,  
I come to harm, yet thou shalt not escape;  
Thy back is broad enow to pay thy jape.'

Half blind with rage the king before him  
passed,

But naught of all he doomed him to durst  
say,

Lest he from rest nigh won should yet be  
cast;

So with a swelling heart he took his way,  
Thinking right soon his shame to cast away,  
And the carle followed still, ill satisfied  
With such a wretched losel to abide.

Fair was the ranger's house, and new and  
white,

And by the king built scarce a year agone,  
And carved about for this same lord's de-  
light

With woodland stories deftly wrought in  
stone;

There oft the king was wont to come alone,  
For much he loved this lord, who erst had  
been

A landless squire, a servant of the queen.

Now long a lord and clad in rich attire,  
In his fair hall he sat before the wine,  
Watching the evening sun's yet burning fire  
Through the close branches of his pleas-  
ance shine,

In that mood when man thinks himself  
divine,

Remembering not whereto we all must  
come,

Not thinking aught but of his happy home.

From just outside loud mocking merriment  
He heard midst this; and therewithal a  
squire

Came hurrying up, his laughter scarcely  
spent,

Who said, 'My lord, a man in such attire  
As Adam's ere he took the devil's hire,  
Who saith that thou wilt know him for the  
king,

Up from the gate John Porter needs must  
bring.

'He to the king is nothing like in aught  
But that his beard he wear eth in such  
guise

As doth my lord: wilt thou that he be  
brought?

Perchance some treason 'neath his madness  
lies.'

'Yea,' saith the ranger, 'that may well be  
wise;

But haste, for this eve am I well at ease,  
Nor would be wearied with such folks as  
these.'

Then went the squire, and, coming back  
again,

The porter and the naked king brought in,  
Who thinking now that this should end his  
pain,

Forgot his fury and the porter's sin,  
And said, 'Thou wonderest how I came to  
win

This raiment, that kings long have ceased  
to wear,  
Since Noah's flood has altered all the air?

'Well, thou shalt know; but first I pray  
thee, Hugh,  
Reach me that cloak that lieth on the  
board,

For certes, though thy folk are leal and  
true,

It seemeth that they deem a mighty lord  
Is made by crown, and silken robe, and  
sword:

Lo, such are borel folk; but thou and I  
Fail not to know the signs of majesty.

'Thou risest not! thou lookest strange on  
me!

Ah! what is this? Who reigneth in my  
stead?

How long hast thou been plotting secretly?  
Then slay me now, for if I be not dead  
Armies will rise up when I nod my head.  
Slay me! — or cast thy treachery away,  
And have anew my favor from this day.'

'Why should I tell thee that thou ne'er  
wast king?'

The ranger said, 'thou knowest not what I  
say;

Poor man, I pray God help thee in this  
thing,

And, ere thou diest, send thee some good  
day;

Nor hence unholpen shalt thou go away.  
Good fellows, this poor creature is but  
mad;

Take him, and in a coat let him be clad,

'And give him meat and drink, and on this  
night

Beneath some roof of ours let him abide,  
For some day God may set his folly right.'  
Then spread the king his arms abroad and  
cried,

'Woe to thy food, thy house, and thee be-  
tide,

Thou loathsome traitor! Get ye from the  
hall,

Lest smitten by God's hand this roof should  
fall!'

'Yea, if the world be but an idle dream,  
And God deals naught with it, yet shall ye  
see

Red flame from out these carven windows  
stream.

I—I will burn this vile place utterly,  
And strewn with salt the poisonous earth  
shall be,  
That such a wretch of such a man has  
made,  
That so such Judases may grow afraid.'

Thus raving, those who held him he shook  
off

And rushed from out the hall, nigh mad  
indeed,  
And gained the gate, not heeding blow or  
scoff,

Nor longer of his nakedness took heed,  
But ran, he knew not where, at headlong  
speed,

Till, when at last his strength was fully  
spent,

Worn out, he fell beneath a woody bent.

But for the ranger, left alone in peace,  
He bade his folk bring in the minstrelsy;  
And thinking of his life, and fair increase  
Of all his goods, a happy man was he,  
And towards his master felt right lovingly,  
And said, 'This luckless madman will  
avail,

When next I see the king, for one more  
tale.'

### III

Meanwhile the real king by the roadside lay,  
Panting, confused, scarce knowing if he  
dreamed,

Until at last, when vanished was the day,  
Through the dark night far off a bright  
light gleamed;

Which growing quickly, down the road  
there stream'd

The glare of torches, held by men who  
ran

Before the litter of a mighty man.

These mixed with soldiers soon the road  
did fill,

And on their harness could the king behold  
The badge of one erst wont to do his will;  
A counsellor, a gatherer-up of gold,

Who underneath his rule had now grown  
old;

Then wrath and bitterness so filled his  
heart,

That from his wretched lair he needs must  
start,

And o'er the clatter shrilly did he cry,  
'Well met, Duke Peter! ever art thou wise;  
Surely thou wilt not let a day go by

Ere thou art good friends with mine ene-  
mies;

O fit to rule within a land of lies,  
Go on thy journey, make thyself more meet  
To sit in hell beneath the devil's feet!'

But as he ceased a soldier drew anear,  
And smote him flatling with his sheath'd  
sword,

And said, 'Speak louder, that my lord may  
hear,

And give thee wages for thy ribald word!  
Come forth, for I must show thee to my  
lord,

For he may think thee more than mad  
indeed,  
Who of men's ways hast taken wondrous  
heed.'

Now was the litter stayed midmost the road,  
And round about the torches in a ring  
Were gathered, and their flickering light  
now glowed

In gold and gems and many a lordly thing,  
And showed that face well known unto the  
king,

That, smiling yesterday, right humble  
words

Had spoken midst the concourse of the  
lords.

But now he said, 'Man, thou wert cursing  
me,

If these folk heard aright; what wilt thou  
then?

Deem'st thou that I have done some wrong  
to thee,

Or hast thou scathe from any of my men?  
In any case tell all thy tale again

When on the judgment-seat thou see'st  
me sit,

And I will give no careless ear to it.'

'The night is dark, and in the summer wind  
The torches flicker; canst thou see my face?  
Bid them draw nigher yet, and call to mind  
Who gave thee all thy riches and thy  
place—

Well; if thou canst, deny me with such  
grace

As by the firelight Peter swore of old,  
When in that Maundy-week the night was  
cold—

'Alas! canst thou not see I am the king?'  
So spoke he, as their eyes met mid the  
blaze,

And the king saw the dread foreshadowing,  
Within the elder's proud and stony gaze,  
Of what those lips, thin with the lapse of  
days,

Should utter now; nor better it befell:  
'Friend, a strange story thou art pleased  
to tell;

'Thy luck it is thou tellest it to me,  
Who deem thee mad and let thee go thy  
way:

The king is not a man to pity thee,  
Or on thy folly thy fool's tale to lay:  
Poor fool! take this, and with the light of  
day  
Buy food and raiment of some laboring  
clown,  
And by my counsel keep thee from the  
town,

'For fear thy madness break out in some  
place

Where folk thy body to the judge must  
hale,

And then indeed wert thou in evil case—  
Press on, sirs! or the time will not avail.  
There stood the king, with limbs that 'gan  
to fail,

Speechless, and holding in his trembling  
hand

A coin new stamped for people of the land;

Thereon, with sceptre, crown, and royal  
robe,

The image of a king, himself, was wrought;  
His jewelled feet upon a quartered globe,  
As though by him all men were vain and  
naught.

One moment the red glare the silver caught,  
As the lord ceased; the next his hurrying  
folk

The flaring circle round the litter broke.

The next, their shadows barred a patch of  
light,

Fast vanishing, all else around was black;  
And the poor wretch, left lonely with the  
night,

Muttered, 'I wish the day would ne'er come  
back,

If all that once I had I now must lack:  
Ah, God! how long is it since I was king,  
Nor lacked enough to wish for anything?'

Then down the lonely road he wandered  
yet,

Following the vanished lights, he scarce  
knew why,

Till he began his sorrows to forget,  
And, steeped in drowsiness, at last drew  
nigh

A grassy bank, where worn with misery,  
He slept the dreamless sleep of weariness,  
That many a time such wretches' eyes will  
bless.

#### IV

But at the dawn he woke, nor knew at first  
What ugly chain of grief had brought him  
there,

Nor why he felt so wretched and accurst;  
At last remembering, the fresh morning air,

The rising sun, and all things fresh and  
fair,  
Yet caused some little hope in him to rise,  
That end might come to these new miseries.

So looking round about, he saw that he  
To his own city gates was come anear;  
Then he arose and going warily,  
And hiding now and then for very fear  
Of folk who bore their goods and country  
cheer

Unto the city's market, at the last  
Unto a stone's-throw of the gate he passed.

But when he drew unto the very gate,  
Into the throng of country folk he came  
Who for the opening of the door did wait,  
Of whom some mocked, and some cried at  
him shame,

And some would know his country and his  
name;

But one into his wagon drew him up,  
And gave him milk from out a beechen cup,

And asked him of his name and misery;  
Then in his throat a swelling passion rose,

Which yet he swallowed down, and  
'Friend,' said he,  
'Last night I had the hap to meet the foes  
Of God and man, who robbed me, and  
with blows

Stripped off my weed and left me on the  
way:

Thomas the Pilgrim am I called to-day.

'A merchant am I of another town,  
And rich enow to pay thee for thy deed,  
If at the king's door thou wilt set me down;  
For there a squire I know, who at my  
need

Will give me food and drink and fitting  
weed.

What is thy name? in what place dost thou  
live?

That I some day great gifts to thee may  
give.'

'Fair sir,' the carle said, 'I am poor enow,  
Though certes food I lack not easily;  
My name is Christopher a-Green; I sow  
A little orchard set with bush and tree,  
And ever there the kind land keepeth me,  
For I, now fifty, from a little boy  
Have dwelt thereon, and known both grief  
and joy.

'The house my grandsire built there has  
grown old,

And certainly a bounteous gift it were  
If thou shouldst give me just enough of  
gold

To build it new; nor shouldst thou lack my  
prayer

For such a gift.' 'Nay, friend, have thou  
no care,'

The king said: 'this is but a little thing  
To me, who oft am richer than the king.'

Now as they talked the gate was opened wide,  
And toward the palace went they through the street,

And Christopher walked ever by the side  
Of his rough wain, where midst the may-flowers sweet

Jovinian lay, that folk whom they might meet

Might see him not to mock at his bare skin :  
So shortly to the king's door did they win.

Then through the open gate Jovinian ran  
Of the first court, and no man stayed him there;

But as he reached the second gate, a man  
Of the king's household, seeing him all bare  
And bloody, cried out, 'Whither dost thou fare?

Sure thou art seventy times more mad  
than mad,

Or else some magic potion thou hast had,

'Whereby thou fear'st not steel or anything.'  
'But,' said the king, 'good fellow, I know thee;

And can it be thou knowest not thy king?  
Nay, thou shalt have a good reward of me,  
That thou wouldst rather have than ten years' fee,

If thou wilt clothe me in fair weed again,  
For now to see my council am I fain.'

'Out, ribald!' quoth the fellow, 'what say'st thou?

Thou art my lord, whom God reward and bless?

Truly before long shalt thou find out how  
John Hangman cureth ill folk's wilfulness;  
Yea, from his scourge the blood has run  
for less

Than that which now thou sayest: nay,  
what say I?

For lighter words have I seen tall men die.

'Come now, the sergeants to this thing shall see!'

So to the guardroom was Jovinian brought,  
Where his own soldiers mocked him bitterly,

And all his desperate words they heeded naught;

Until at last there came to him this thought,  
That never from this misery should he win,

But, spite of all his struggles, die therein.

And terrible it seemed, that everything  
So utterly was changed since yesterday;

That these who were the soldiers of the king.

Ready to lie down in the common way  
Before him, nor durst rest if he bade play,  
Now stood and mocked him, knowing not the face  
At whose command each man there had his place.

'Ah, God!' said he, 'is this another earth  
From that whereon I stood two days ago?  
Or else in sleep have I had second birth?  
Or among mocking shadows do I go,  
Unchanged myself of flesh and fell, although

My fair weed I have lost and royal gear?  
And meanwhile all are changed that I meet here;

'And yet in heart and nowise outwardly.  
Amid his wretched thoughts two sergeants came,  
Who said, 'Hold, sirs! because the king would see  
The man who thus so rashly brings him shame,  
By taking his high style and spotless name,  
That never has been questioned ere to-day.  
Come, fool! needs is it thou must go our way.'

So at the sight of him all men turned round,  
As 'twixt these two across the courts he went,  
With downcast head and hands together bound;  
While from the windows maid and varlet leant,  
And through the morning air fresh laughter sent;  
Until unto the threshold they were come  
Of the great hall within that kingly home.

Therewith right fast Jovinian's heart must beat,

As now he thought, 'Lo, here shall end the strife;

For either shall I sit on mine own seat,  
Known unto all, soldier and lord and wife,  
Or else is this the ending of my life,  
And no man henceforth shall remember me,

And a vain name in records shall I be.

Therewith he raised his head up, and held

One clad in gold set on his royal throne,  
Gold-crowned, whose hand the ivory sceptre held;

And underneath him sat the queen alone,  
Ringed round with standing lords, of whom  
not one

Did aught but utmost reverence unto him;  
Then did Jovinian shake in every limb.

Yet midst amaze and rage to him it seemed  
This man was nowise like him in the face;  
But with a marvellous glory his head  
gleamed,

As though an angel sat in that high place,  
Where erst he sat like all his royal race —  
But their eyes met, and with a stern, calm  
brow

The shining one cried out, 'And where art  
thou?

'Where art thou, robber of my majesty?'  
'Was I not king,' he said, 'but yesterday?  
And though to-day folk give my place to  
thee,

I am Jovinian; yes, though none gainsay,  
If on these very stones thou' shouldest me  
slay,

And though no friend be left for me to  
moan,

I am Jovinian still, and king alone.'

Then said that other, 'O thou foolish man,  
King was I yesterday, and long before,  
Nor is my name aught but Jovinian,  
Whom in this house the queen my mother  
bore

Unto my longing father, for right sore  
Was I desired before I saw the light;  
Thou, fool, art first to speak against my  
right.

'And surely well thou meritest to die;  
Yet ere that I bid lead thee unto death,  
Hearken to these my lords that stand anigh,  
And what this faithful queen beside me  
saith,

Then mayst thou many a year hence draw  
thy breath,

If these should stammer in their speech  
one whit:

Behold this face, lords, look ye well on it!

'Thou, O fair queen, say now whose face is  
this!'

Then cried they, 'Hail, O Lord Jovinian!  
Long mayst thou live!' and the queen knelt  
to kiss

His gold-shod feet, and through her face  
there ran

Sweet color, as she said, 'Thou art the man  
By whose side I have lain for many a year;  
Thou art my lord Jovinian, lief and dear.'

Then said he, 'O thou wretch, hear now  
and see!

What thing should hinder me to slay thee  
now?

And yet, indeed, such mercy is in me,  
If thou wilt kneel down humbly and avow  
Thou art no king, but base-born, as I know  
Thou art indeed, in mine house shalt thou  
live,

And as thy service is, so shalt thou thrive.'

But the unhappy king laughed bitterly,  
The red blood rose to flush his visage wan  
Where erst the gray of death began to be:  
'Thou liest!' he said. 'I am Jovinian,  
Come of great kings; nor am I such a man  
As still to live when all delight is gone,  
As thou mightst do, who sittest on my  
throne.'

No answer made the other for a while,  
But sat and gazed upon him steadfastly,  
Until across his face there came a smile,  
Where scorn seemed mingled with some  
great pity.

And then he said, 'Nathless thou shalt not  
die,  
But live on as thou mayst, a lowly man,  
Forgetting thou wast once Jovinian.'

Then wildly round the hall Jovinian gazed,  
Turning about to many a well-known face;  
But none of all his folk seemed grieved or  
'mazed,  
But stood unmoved, each in his wonted  
place:

There were the Lords, the Marshal with  
his mace,  
The Chamberlain, the Captain of the Guard,  
Gray-headed, with his wrinkled face and  
hard,

That had peered down so many a lane of  
war;

There stood the grave ambassadors arow,  
Come from half-conquered lands; without  
the bar

The foreign merchants gazed upon the  
show,

Willing new things of that great land to  
know;

Nor was there any doubt in any man  
That the gold throne still held Jovinian.

Yea, as the sergeants laid their hands on  
him,

The mighty hound that crouched before  
the throne,

Flew at him fain to tear him limb from  
limb,

Though in the woods the brown bear's  
dying groan

He and that beast had often heard alone.  
'Ah!' muttered he, 'take thou thy wages  
too,

Worship the risen sun as these men do.'

They thrust him out; and as he passed the  
door,

The murmur of the stately court he heard  
Behind him, and soft footfalls on the floor,  
And though by this somewhat his skin was  
seared,

Hung back at the rough eager wind afeard;

But from the place they dragged him  
through the gate,  
Wherethrough he oft had rid in royal  
state.

Then down the streets they led him, where  
of old  
He, coming back from some well-finished  
war,  
Had seen the line of flashing steel and gold  
Wind upwards 'twixt the houses from the  
bar,  
While clashed the bells' from wreathèd  
spires afar;  
Now moaning, as they haled him on, he  
said,  
'God and the world against one lonely  
head!'

## v

But soon, the bar being passed, they loosed  
their hold,  
And said, 'Thus saith by us our lord the  
king,  
Dwell now in peace, but yet be not so bold  
To come again, or to thy lies to cling,  
Lest unto thee there fall a worser thing;  
And for ourselves we bid thee ever pray  
For him who has been good to thee this  
day.'

Therewith they turned away into the town,  
And still he wandered on and knew not  
where,  
Till, stumbling at the last, he fell adown,  
And looking round beheld a brook right  
fair,  
That ran in pools and shallows here and  
there,  
And on the further side of it a wood,  
Nigh which a lowly clay-built hovel stood.

Gazing thereat, it came into his mind  
A priest dwelt there, a hermit wise and  
old,  
Whom he had ridden oftentimes to find,  
In days when first the sceptre he did hold,  
And unto whom his mind he oft had told,  
And had good counsel from him, though  
indeed  
A scanty crop had sprung from that good  
seed.

Therefore he passed the brook with heavy  
cheer,  
And toward the little house went speedily,  
And at the door knocked, trembling with  
his fear,  
Because he thought, 'Will he remember  
me?  
If not, within me must there surely be  
Some devil who turns everything to ill,  
And makes my wretched body do his will.'

So, while such doleful things as this he  
thought,

There came unto the door the holy man,  
Who said, 'Good friend, what tidings hast  
thou brought?'

'Father,' he said, 'knowest thou Jovinian?  
Know'st thou me not, made naked, poor,  
and wan?

Alas, O father, am I not the king,  
The rightful lord of thee and everything?'

'Nay, thou art mad to tell me such a tale!'  
The hermit said; 'if thou seek'st soul's  
health here,

Right little will such words as this avail;  
It were a better deed to shrive thee clear,  
And take the pardon Christ has bought so  
dear,

Than to an ancient man such mocks to  
say

That would be fitter for a Christmas play.'

So to his hut he got him back again;  
And fell the unhappy king upon his knees,  
And unto God at last he did complain,  
Saying, 'Lord God, what bitter things are  
these?

What hast thou done, that every man that  
sees

This wretched body, of my death is fain?  
O Lord God, give me back myself again,

E'en if therewith I needs must die straight-  
way!

Indeed I know that since upon the earth  
I first did go, I ever day by day  
Have grown the worse, who was of little  
worth

E'en at the best time since my helpless birth.  
And yet it pleased thee once to make me  
king;

Why hast thou made me now this wretched  
thing?

'Why am I hated so of every one?  
Wilt thou not let me live my life again,  
Forgetting all the deeds that I have done,  
Forgetting my old name, and honors vain,  
That I may cast away this lonely pain?  
Yet if thou wilt not, help me in this strife,  
That I may pass my little span of life,

'Not made a monster by unhappiness.  
What shall I say? Thou mad'st me weak  
of will,

Thou wrapped'st me in ease and carelessness,

And yet, as some folk say, thou lovest me  
still;

Look down, of folly I have had my fill,  
And am but now as first thou madest me,  
Weak, yielding clay to take impress of  
thee.'

So said he weeping, and but scarce had done,  
When yet again came forth that hermit old,

And said, 'Alas! my master and my son,  
Is this a dream my wearied eyes behold?  
What doleful wonder now shall I be told  
Of that ill world that I so long have left?  
What thing thy glory from thee has bereft?'

A strange surprise of joy therewith there came  
To that worn heart; he said, 'For some great sin  
The Lord my God has brought me unto shame;  
I am unknown of servants, wife, and kin,  
Unknown of all the lords that stand within  
My father's house; nor didst thou know me more  
When e'en just now I stood before thy door.'

'Now, since thou know'st me, surely God is good,  
And will not slay me, and good hope I have  
Of help from Him that died upon the rood,  
And is a mighty lord to slay and save:  
So now again these blind men will I brave,  
If thou wilt give me of thy poorest weed,  
And some rough food, the which I sorely need;

'Then of my sins thou straight shalt shrive  
me clean.'  
Then, weeping, said the holy man, 'Dear lord,  
What heap of woes upon thine head has been!  
Enter, O king, take this rough gown and cord,  
And scanty food, my hovel can afford;  
And tell me everything thou hast to say,  
And then the High God speed thee on thy way.'

So when in coarse serge raiment he was clad,  
He told him all his pride had made him think,  
And showed him of his life both good and bad;  
And then, being houselled, did he eat and drink,  
While in the wise man's heart his words did sink.  
For, 'God be praised!' he thought, 'I am no king.'

Who scarcely shall do right in anything'  
Then he made ready for the king his ass,  
And bade again God speed him on the way;  
And down the road the king made haste to pass

As it was growing toward the end of day,  
With sober joy for troubles passed away,  
But trembling still, as onward he did ride,  
Meeting few folk upon that eventide.

## VI

So to the city gate being come at last,  
He noted there two ancient warders stand.  
Whereof one looked askance as he went past,  
And whispered low behind his held-up hand  
Unto his mate, 'The king, who gave command  
That if disguised he passed this gate today,  
No reverence we should do him on the way.'

Thereat with joy Jovinian smiled again,  
And so passed onward quickly down the street;  
And wellnigh was he eased of all his pain  
When he beheld the folk that he might meet  
Gaze hard at him, as though they fain would greet  
His well-known face, but durst not, knowing well  
He would not any of his state should tell.

Withal unto the palace being come,  
He lighted down thereby and enterèd,  
And once again it seemed his royal home,  
For folk again before him bowed the head;  
And to him came a squire, who softly said,  
'The queen awaits thee, O my lord the king,  
Within the little hall where minstrels sing,  
'Since there thou badst her meet thee on this night.'  
'Lead on then!' said the king; and in his heart  
He said, 'Perfay all goeth more than right,  
And I am king again;' but with a start  
He thought of him who played the kingly part  
That morn, yet said, 'If God will have it so,  
This man like all the rest my face will know.'

So in the little hall the queen he found,  
Asleep, as one a spell binds suddenly;  
For her fair broidery lay upon the ground,  
And in her lap her open hand did lie,  
The silken-threaded needle close thereby;  
And by her stood that image of the king  
In rich apparel, crown, and signet ring.

But when the king stepped forth with  
angry eye  
And would have spoken, came a sudden  
light,  
And changèd was that other utterly;  
For he was clad in robe of shining white,  
Inwrought with flowers of unnamed colors  
bright,  
Girt with a marvellous girdle, and whose  
hem  
Fell to his naked feet and shone in them;  
And from his shoulders did two wings  
arise,  
That with the swaying of his body played  
This way and that; of strange and lovely  
dyes  
Their feathers were, and wonderfully  
made:  
And now he spoke, 'O king, be not dis-  
mayed,  
Or think my coming here so strange to be,  
For oft ere this have I been close to thee.  
'And now thou knowest in how short a  
space  
The God that made the world can unmake  
thee,  
And though he alter in no whit thy face,  
Can make all folk forget thee utterly,  
That thou to-day a nameless wretch mayst  
be,  
Who yesterday woke up without a peer,  
The wide world's marvel and the people's  
fear.

'Behold, thou oughtest to thank God for  
this,  
That on the hither side of thy dark grave  
Thou well hast learned how great a God  
he is,  
Who from the heavens countless rebels  
drove,  
Yet turns himself such folk as thee to save;  
For many a man thinks naught at all of it,  
Till in a darksome land he comes to sit,

'Lamenting everything: so do not thou!  
For inasmuch as thou thought'st not to die,  
This thing may happen to thee even now.  
Because the day unspeakable draws nigh,  
When bathed in unknown flame all things  
shall lie;  
And if thou art upon God's side that day,  
Unslain, thine earthly part shall pass away.  
'Or if thy body in the grave must rot,  
Well mayst thou see how small a thing is  
this,  
Whose pain of yesterday now hurts thee  
not,  
Now thou hast come again to earthly bliss,  
Though bitter-sweet thou knowest well this  
is,  
And though no coming day can ever see  
Ending of happiness where thou mayst be.

'Now must I go, nor wilt thou see me more  
Until the day when, unto thee at least,  
This world is gone, and an unmeasured  
shore,

Where all is wonderful and changed, thou  
seest:

Therefore, farewell! at council and at feast  
Thy nobles shalt thou meet as thou hast  
done,  
Nor wilt thou more be strange to any one.'

So scarce had he done speaking ere his  
wings

Within the doorway of the hall did gleam,  
And then he vanished quite; and all these  
things

Unto Jovinian little more did seem  
Than some distinct and well-remembered  
dream,

From which one wakes amidst a feverish  
night,

Taking the moonshine for the morning  
light.

Silent he stood, not moving for a while,  
Pondering o'er all these wondrous things,  
until

The queen arose from sleep, and with a  
smile

Said, 'O fair lord, your great men by your  
will

E'en as I speak the banquet-chamber fill,  
To greet thee amidst joy and revelling;  
Wilt thou not therefore meet them as a  
king?'

So from that place of marvels having gone,  
Half-mazed, he soon was clad in rich  
array,

And sat thereafter on his kingly throne,  
As though no other had sat there that day;  
Nor did a soul of all his household say  
A word about the man who on that morn  
Had stood there naked, helpless, and for-  
lorn.

But ever, day by day, the thought of it  
Within Jovinian's heart the clearer grew,  
As o'er his head the ceaseless time did flit,  
And everything still towards its ending  
drew,

New things becoming old, and old things  
new;

Till, when a moment of eternity  
Had passed, gray-headed did Jovinian lie

One sweet May morning, wakeful in his  
bed,  
And thought, 'That day is thirty years  
agone  
Since useless folly came into my head,  
Whereby, before the steps of mine own  
throne,  
I stood in helpless agony alone,

And of the wondrous things that there  
befell,  
When I am gone there will be none to  
tell.

'No man is now alive who thinks that he  
Who bade thrust out the madman on that  
tide

Was other than the king they used to see:  
Long years have passed now since the her-  
mit died;

So must I tell the tale, ere by his side  
I lie, lest it be unrecorded quite,  
Like a forgotten dream in morning light.

'Yea, lest I die ere night come, this same  
day

Unto some scribe will I tell everything,  
That it may lie, when I am gone away,  
Stored up within the archives of the king;  
And may God grant the words thereof may  
ring

Like His own voice in the next comer's  
ears,  
Whereby his folk shall shed the fewer  
tears!'

So it was done, and at the king's command  
A clerk that day did note it every whit,  
And after by a man of skilful hand  
In golden letters fairly was it writ;  
Yet little heed the new king took of it  
That filled the throne when King Jovinian  
died,  
So much did all things feed his swelling  
pride.

But whether God chastised him in his turn,  
And he grew wise thereafter, I know not;  
I think by eld alone he came to learn  
How lowly on some day must be his lot.  
But ye, O kings, think all that ye have got  
To be but gauds cast out upon some heap,  
And stolen the while the Master was asleep.

### THE WRITING ON THE IMAGE

#### ARGUMENT

[How on an Image that stood anciently in Rome  
were written certain words, which none under-  
stood, until a scholar, coming there, knew their  
meaning, and thereby discovered great marvels,  
but withal died miserably.]

In half-forgotten days of old,  
As by our fathers we were told,  
Within the town of Rome there stood  
An image cut of cornel-wood,  
And on the upraised hand of it  
Men might behold these letters writ —  
'PERCUTE HIC:' which is to say,  
In that tongue that we speak to-day,  
'Strike here!' nor yet did any know  
The cause why this was written so.

Thus in the middle of the square,  
In the hot sun and summer air,  
The snow-drift and the driving rain,  
That image stood, with little pain,  
For twice a hundred years and ten;  
While many a band of striving men  
Were driven betwixt woe and mirth  
Swiftly across the weary earth,  
From nothing unto dark nothing:  
And many an emperor and king,  
Passing with glory or with shame,  
Left little record of his name,  
And no remembrance of the face  
Once watched with awe for gifts or grace.

Fear little, then, I counsel you,  
What any son of man can do;  
Because a log of wood will last  
While many a life of man goes past,  
And all is over in short space.

Now so it chanced that to this place  
There came a man of Sicily,  
Who, when the image he did see,  
Knew full well who, in days of yore,  
Had set it there; for much strange lore,  
In Egypt and in Babylon,  
This man with painful toil had won,  
And many secret things could do:  
So verily full well he knew  
That master of all sorcery  
Who wrought the thing in days gone by,  
And doubted not that some great spell  
It guarded, but could nowise tell  
What it might be. So, day by day,  
Still would he loiter on the way,  
And watch the image carefully,  
Well mocked of many a passer-by.

And on a day he stood and gazed  
Upon the slender finger, raised  
Against a doubtful cloudy sky,  
Nigh noon tide; and thought, 'Certainly  
The master who made thee so fair  
By wondrous art, had not stopped there,  
But made thee speak, had he not thought  
That thereby evil might be brought  
Upon his spell.' But as he spoke,  
From out a cloud the noon sun broke  
With watery light, and shadows cold:  
Then did the Scholar well behold  
How, from that finger carved to tell  
Those words, a short black shadow fell  
Upon a certain spot of ground,  
And thereon, looking all around  
And seeing none heeding, went straightway  
Whereas the finger's shadow lay,  
And with his knife about the place  
A little circle did he trace;  
Then home he turned with throbbing head,  
And forthright gat him to his bed,  
And slept until the night was late  
And few men stirred from gate to gate.  
So when at midnight he did wake,  
Pickaxe and shovel did he take,

And, going to that now silent square,  
He found the mark his knife made there,  
And quietly with many a stroke  
The pavement of the place he broke:  
And so, the stones being set apart,  
He 'gan to dig with beating heart,  
And from the hole in haste he cast  
The marl and gravel; till at last,  
Full shoulder high, his arms were jarred,  
For suddenly his spade struck hard  
With clang against some metal thing:  
And soon he found a brazen ring,  
All green with rust, twisted, and great  
As a man's wrist, set in a plate  
Of copper, wrought all curiously  
With words unknown though plain to see  
Spite of the rust; and flowering trees,  
And beasts, and wicked images,  
Whereat he shuddered; for he knew  
What ill things he might come to do,  
If he should still take part with these  
And that great master strive to please.

But small time had he then to stand  
And think, so straight he set his hand  
Unto the ring; but where he thought  
That by main strength it must be brought  
From out its place, lo! easily  
It came away, and let him see  
A winding staircase wrought of stone,  
Wherethrough the new-come wind did  
moan.

Then thought he, 'If I come alive  
From out this place, well shall I thrive,  
For I may look here certainly  
The treasures of a king to see,  
A mightier man than men are now.  
So in few days what man shall know  
The needy Scholar, seeing me  
Great in the place where great men be,  
The richest man in all the land?  
Beside the best then shall I stand,  
And some unheard-of palace have;  
And if my soul I may not save  
In heaven, yet here in all men's eyes  
Will I make some sweet paradise,  
With marble cloisters, and with trees  
And bubbling wells, and fantasies,  
And things all men deem strange and rare,  
And crowds of women kind and fair,  
That I may see, if so I please,  
Laid on the flowers, or mid the trees  
With half-clad bodies wandering.  
There, dwelling happier than the king,  
What lovely days may yet be mine!  
How shall I live with love and wine  
And music, till I come to die!  
And then — who knoweth certainly  
What hap to us when we are dead?  
Truly I think by likelihead  
Naught hap to us of good or bad;  
Therefore on earth will I be glad

A short space, free from hope or fear;  
And fearless will I enter here  
And meet my fate, whatso it be.'

Now on his back a bag had he,  
To bear what treasure he might win,  
And therewith now did he begin  
• To go adown the winding stair;  
And found the walls all painted fair  
With images of many a thing,  
Warrior and priest, and queen and king,  
But nothing knew what they might be.  
Which things full clearly could he see,  
For lamps were hung up here and there  
Of strange device, but wrought right fair,  
And pleasant savor came from them.

At last a curtain, on whose hem  
Unknown words in red gold were writ,  
He reached, and softly raising it  
Stepped back, for now did he behold  
A goodly hall hung round with gold,  
And at the upper end could see  
Sitting a glorious company:  
Therefore he trembled, thinking well  
They were no men, but fiends of hell.  
But while he waited, trembling sore,  
And doubtful of his late-learned lore,  
A cold blast of the outer air  
Blew out the lamps upon the stair,  
And all was dark behind him; then  
Did he fear less to face those men  
Than, turning round, to leave them there  
While he went groping up the stair.  
Yea, since he heard no cry or call  
Or any speech from them at all,  
He doubted they were images  
Set there some dying king to please  
By that great master of the art;  
Therefore at last with stouter heart  
He raised the cloth and entered in  
In hope that happy life to win,  
And drawing nigher did behold  
That these were bodies dead and cold,  
Attired in full royal guise,  
And wrought by art in such a wise  
That living they all seemed to be,  
Whose very eyes he well could see,  
That now beheld not foul or fair,  
Shining as though alive they were.  
And midmost of that company  
An ancient king that man could see,  
A mighty man, whose beard of gray  
A foot over his gold gown lay;  
And next beside him sat his queen,  
Who in a flowery gown of green  
And golden mantle well was clad,  
And on her neck a collar had  
Too heavy for her dainty breast;  
Her loins by such a belt were pressed  
That whoso in his treasury  
Held that alone a king might be.  
On either side of these, a lord  
Stood heedfully before the board,

And in their hands held bread and wine  
For service; behind these did shine  
The armor of the guards, and then  
The well-attired serving-men,  
The minstrels clad in raiment meet;  
And over against the royal seat  
Was hung a lamp, although no flame  
Was burning there, but there was set  
Within its open golden fret  
A huge carbuncle, red and bright;  
Wherefrom shone forth such a light  
That great hall was as clear by it,  
As though by wax it had been lit,  
As some great church at Easter-tide.

Now set a little way aside,  
Six paces from the dais stood,  
An image made of brass and wood,  
In likeness of a full-armed knight  
Who pointed 'gainst the ruddy light  
A huge shaft ready in a bow.

Pondering how he could come to know  
What all these marvellous matters meant,  
About the hall the Scholar went,  
Trembling, though nothing moved as yet;  
And for a while did he forget  
The longings that had brought him there  
In wondering at these marvels fair;  
And still for fear he doubted much  
One jewel of their robes to touch.

But as about the hall he passed  
He grew more used to them at last,  
And thought, 'Swiftly the time goes by,  
And now no doubt the day draws nigh.  
Folk will be stirring; by my head  
A fool I am to fear the dead,  
Who have seen living things enow,  
Whose very names no man can know,  
Whose shapes brave men might well affright

More than the lion in the night  
Wandering for food;' therewith he drew  
Unto those royal corpses two,  
That on dead brows still wore the crown;  
And midst the golden cups set down  
The rugged wallet from his back,  
Patched of strong leather, brown and black.

Then, opening wide its mouth, took up  
From off the board a golden cup  
The king's dead hand was laid upon,  
Whose unmoved eyes upon him shone,  
And recked no more of that last shame  
Than if he were the beggar lame,  
Who in old days was wont to wait  
For a dog's meal beside the gate.

Of which shame naught our man did  
reck,  
But laid his hand upon the neck  
Of the slim queen, and thence undid  
The jewelled collar, that straight slid  
Down her smooth bosom to the board.  
And when these matters he had stored

Safe in his sack, with both their crowns,  
The jewelled parts of their rich gowns,  
Their shoes and belts, brooches and rings,  
And cleared the board of all rich things,  
He staggered with them down the hall.  
But as he went his eyes did fall  
Upon the wonderful green stone,  
Upon the hall floor laid alone.  
He said, 'Though thou art not so great  
To add by much unto the weight  
Of this my sack indeed, yet thou,  
Certes, would make me rich enow,  
That verily with thee I might  
Wage one half of the world to fight  
The other half of it, and I  
The lord of all the world might die;  
I will not leave thee:' therewithal  
He knelt down midmost of the hall,  
Thinking it would come easily  
Into his hand; but when that he  
Gat hold of it, full fast it stack.  
So, fuming, down he laid his sack,  
And with both hands pulled lustily.  
But as he strained, he cast his eye  
Unto the dais, and saw there  
The image who the great bow bare  
Moving the bowstring to his ear;  
So, shrieking out aloud for fear,  
Of that rich stone he loosed his hold  
And, catching up his bag of gold,  
Gat to his feet: but ere he stood,  
The evil thing of brass and wood  
Up to his ears the notches drew;  
And clanging forth the arrow flew,  
And midmost of the carbuncle  
Clanging again, the forked barbs fell,  
And all was dark as pitch straightway.

So there until the judgment day  
Shall come and find his bones laid low,  
And raise them up for weal or woe;  
This man must bide; cast down he lay,  
While all his past life day by day  
In one short moment he could see  
Drawn out before him, while that he  
In terror by that fatal stone  
Was laid, and scarcely dared to moan.  
But in a while his hope returned,  
And then, though nothing he discerned  
He gat him up upon his feet,  
And all about the walls he beat  
To find some token of the door,  
But never could he find it more,  
For by some dreadful sorcery  
All was sealed close as it might be,  
And midst the marvels of that hall  
This Scholar found the end of all.

But in the town on that same night,  
An hour before the dawn of light,  
Such storm upon the place there fell,  
That not the oldest man could tell  
Of such another; and thereby  
The image was burnt utterly,

Being stricken from the clouds above;  
And folk deemed that same bolt did move  
The pavement where that wretched one  
Unto his foredoomed fate had gone,  
Because the plate was set again  
Into its place, and the great rain  
Washed the earth down, and *sorcery*  
Had hid the place where it did lie.

So soon the stones were set all straight;  
But yet the folk, afraid of fate,  
Where once the man of cornel-wood  
Through many a year of bad and good  
Had kept his place, set up alone  
Great Jove himself, cut in white stone,  
But thickly overlaid with gold.  
'Which,' saith my tale, 'you may behold  
Unto this day, although indeed  
Some lord or other, being in need,  
Took every ounce of gold away.'

But now, this tale in some past day  
Being writ, I warrant all is gone,  
Both gold and weather-beaten stone.

Be merry, masters, while ye may,  
For men much quicker pass away.

### LOVE IS ENOUGH

(Final Chorus)

[1873.]

LOVE is enough: ho ye who seek saving,  
Go no further; come hither; there have  
been who have found it,  
And these know the House of Fulfilment  
of Craving;  
These know the Cup with the roses  
around it,  
These know the World's Wound and the  
balm that hath bound it:  
Cry out, the World heedeth not, "Love,  
lead us home!"

He leadeth, He harkeneth, He cometh to  
you-ward;  
Set your faces as steel to the fears that  
assemble  
Round his goad for the faint, and his  
scourge for the foward:  
Lo his lips, how with tales of last kisses  
they tremble!  
Lo his eyes of all sorrow that may not  
dissemble!  
Cry out, for he heedeth, "O Love, lead us  
home!"

O harken the words of his voice of com-  
passion:  
"Come cling round about me, ye faith-  
ful who sicken  
Of the weary unrest and the world's pass-  
ing fashion!"

As the rain in mid-morning your troubles  
shall thicken,  
But surely within you some Godhead  
doth quicken,  
As ye cry to me heeding, and leading you  
home.

"Come — pain ye shall have, and be blind  
to the ending!  
Come — fear ye shall have, mid the sky's  
overcasting!  
Come — change ye shall have, for far are  
ye wending!  
Come — no crown ye shall have for your  
thirst and your fasting,  
But the kissed lips of Love and fair  
life everlasting!  
Cry out, for one heedeth, who leadeth you  
home!"

Is he gone? was he with us? — ho ye who  
seek saving,  
Go no further; come hither; for have  
we not found it?

Here is the House of Fulfilment of Crav-  
ing;  
Here is the Cup with the roses around  
it;  
The World's Wound well healed, and the  
balm that hath bound it:  
Cry out! for he heedeth, fair Love that  
led home.

### THE DAY IS COMING

[1885.]

COME hither, lads, and harken, for a tale  
there is to tell,  
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when  
all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country,  
a land in the midst of the sea,  
And folk shall call it England in the  
days that are going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the  
days that are yet to come,  
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some  
joy of the ancient home.

For then, laugh not, but listen to this  
strange tale of mine,  
All folk that are in England shall be  
better lodged than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him,  
and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,  
Nor yet come home in the even too faint  
and weary to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work  
and have no fear  
For to-morrow's lack of earning and the  
hunger-wolf anear.

I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad  
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had.

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,  
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.

O strange new wonderful justice! But for whom shall we gather the grain?  
For ourselves and for each of our fellows, and no hand shall labor in vain.

Then all Mine and all Thine shall be Ours, and no more shall any man crave For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill, And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead; And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;

And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvelous fiddle-bow, And the banded choirs of music: all those that do and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's; nor shall any lack a share Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But what are the deeds of to-day, In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting? There are three words to speak;

WE WILL IT, and what is the foeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting? while our brothers droop and die, And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where crowd on crowd they dwell, Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed, hungry hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sordid grief they died, Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of England's pride.

They are gone; there is none can undo it, nor save our souls from the curse; But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the door For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot hope of the poor,

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their unlearned discontent, We must give it voice and wisdom till the waiting-tide be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the living and the dead, And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and put by ease and rest, For the Cause alone is worthy till the good days bring the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail, Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at least, we know: That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the Banners go.

*her music  
visions leaves : alternative  
specification & some words - changes*

# ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

(1837-1909)

## WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING

Chorus from Atalanta in Calydon

[1865.]

WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,  
The mother of months in meadow or plain  
Fills the shadows and windy places  
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;  
And the brown bright nightingale amorous  
Is half assuaged for Itylus,  
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,  
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.  
Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,  
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,  
With a noise of winds and many rivers,  
With a clamour of waters, and with might;  
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,  
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;  
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,  
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,  
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?  
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,  
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!  
For the stars and the winds are unto her  
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;  
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,  
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,  
And all the season of snows and sins;  
The days dividing lover and lover,  
The light that loses, the night that wins;  
And time remembered is grief forgotten.  
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,  
And in green underwood and cover  
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,  
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,  
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes  
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;

And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,  
And the oat is heard above the lyre,  
And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes  
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,  
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,  
Follows with dancing and fills with delight  
The Mænad and the Bassarid;  
And soft as lips that laugh and hide  
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,  
And screen from seeing and leave in sight  
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair  
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;  
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare  
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;  
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,  
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves  
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare  
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

*constant repetition of doublet phrases*

## BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS

Chorus from Atalanta in Calydon  
[1865.]

BEFORE the beginning of years  
There came to the making of man  
Time, with a gift of tears;  
Grief, with a glass that ran;  
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;  
Summer, with flowers that fell;  
Remembrance fallen from heaven,  
And madness risen from hell;  
Strength without hands to smite;  
Love that endures for a breath;  
Night, the shadow of light,  
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand  
Fire, and the falling of tears,  
And a measure of sliding sand  
From under the feet of the years;  
And froth and drift of the sea;  
And dust of the labouring earth;  
And bodies of things to be  
In the houses of death and of birth;  
And wrought with weeping and laughter,  
And fashioned with loathing and love  
With life before and after  
And death beneath and above,

For a day and a night and a morrow,  
That his strength might endure for a  
span  
With travail and heavy sorrow,  
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south  
They gathered as unto strife;  
They breathed upon his mouth,  
They filled his body with life; *saturated with*  
Eyesight and speech they wrought  
For the veils of the soul therein,  
*A time for labour and thought, Biblical knowledge*  
A time to serve and to sin;  
They gave him light in his ways,  
And love, and a space for delight,  
And beauty and length of days,  
And night, and sleep in the night.  
His speech is a burning fire;  
With his lips he travaleth;  
In his heart is a blind desire,  
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;  
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;  
Sows, and he shall not reap;  
His life is a watch or a vision  
Between a sleep and a sleep.

## THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

[1866.]

BEFORE our lives divide for ever,  
While time is with us and hands are  
free,  
(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever  
Hand from hand, as we stand by the  
sea)  
I will say no word that a man might say  
Whose whole life's love goes down in a  
day;  
For this could never have been: and never,  
Though the gods and the years relent,  
shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,  
To think of things that are well out-  
worn?  
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,  
The dream foregone and the deed for-  
borne?  
Though joy be done with and grief be  
vain,  
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain:  
Earth is not spoilt for a single shower:  
But the rain has ruined the ungrown  
corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my  
heart,  
Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.  
The singing seasons divide and depart,  
Winter and summer depart in twain.

*Satiety, & impulsive  
weakness of the flesh.*

*wasted of his power  
and an personal*  
It will grow not again, it is ruined at  
root,  
The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;  
Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet  
smart,  
With sullen savour of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;  
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the  
wine.  
Had you eaten and drunken and found it  
sweet,  
This wild new growth of the corn and  
vine,  
This wine and bread without lees or leaven,  
We had grown as gods, as the gods in  
heaven,  
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,  
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of  
things,  
In the clamour and rumour of life to be,  
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,  
Covered with love as a covering tree,  
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,  
Filled from the heart to the lips with love,  
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with  
his wings,

O love, my love, had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and  
moved  
As the moon moves, loving the world;  
and seen  
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,  
Death consume as a thing unclean.  
Twain halves of a perfect heart, made  
fast  
Soul to soul while the years fell past;  
Had you loved me once, as you have not  
loved:  
Had the chance been with us that has not  
been.

I have put my days and dreams out of  
mind,  
Days that are over, dreams that are  
done.  
Though we seek life through, we shall  
surely find  
There is none of them clear to us now,  
not one.  
But clear are these things: the grass and  
the sand,  
Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at  
hand,  
With lips wide open and face burnt blind,  
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,  
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,  
Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,  
Works downward, sick of the sun and  
the rain;

No wind is rough with the rank rare flowers;  
The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,  
Shudders and shines as the grey winds gleam,  
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,  
Mother of mutable winds and hours,  
A barren mother, a mother-maid,  
Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.  
I would we twain were even as she,  
Lost in the night and the light of the sea,  
Where faint sounds falter and wan beams wade,  
Break, and are broken, and shed into showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,  
They are swift and sad, being born of the sea.

Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,  
Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;  
Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,  
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.

I lose what I long for, save what I can,  
My love, my love, and no love for me!

It is not much that a man can save  
On the sands of life, in the straits of time,  
Who swims in sight of the great third wave  
That never a swimmer shall cross or climb,  
Some waif washed up with the strays and spars  
That ebb-tide shows to the shore and the stars;  
Weed from the water, grass from a grave,  
A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme.

There will no man do for your sake, I think,  
What I would have done for the least word said.  
I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,  
Broken it up for your daily bread:  
Body for body and blood for blood,  
As the flow of the full sea risen to flood  
That yearns and trembles before it sink,  
I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,  
And time at fullest and all his dower,  
I had given you surely, and life to boot,  
Were we once made one for a single hour.  
But now, you are twain, you are cloven apart,  
Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;  
And deep in one is the bitter root,  
And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for you, clung  
To my life if you bade me, played my part  
As it pleased you—these were the thoughts that stung,

The dream that smote with a keener dart  
Than shafts of love or arrows of death;  
These were but as fire is, dust, or breath,  
Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue  
Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together to-day,  
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,  
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,  
Out of the world's way, out of the light,  
Out of the ages of worldly weather,  
Forgotten of all men altogether,  
As the world's first dead, taken wholly away,  
Made one with death, filled full of the night.

How we should slumber, how we should sleep,  
Far in the dark with the dreams and the dews!  
And dreaming, grow to each other, and weep,  
Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse;  
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the dream,  
Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem  
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap  
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight;  
For what shall it profit when men are dead  
To have dreamed, to have loved with the whole soul's might,  
To have looked for day when the day was fled?  
Let come what will, there is one thing worth,  
To have had fair love in the life upon earth:  
To have held love safe till the day grew night,  
While skies had colour and lips were red.

Would I lose you now? would I take you then,  
If I lose you now that my heart has need?  
And come what may after death to men,  
What thing worth this will the dead years breed?  
Lose life, lose all: but at least I know,  
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,  
Had I reached you on earth, I should lose not again,  
In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once sealed mine,  
Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the breath,  
Mixed into me as honey in wine,  
Not time, that sayeth and gainsayeth,  
Nor all strong things had severed us then;  
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,  
Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,  
Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,  
You had grown strong as the sun or the sea.  
But none shall triumph a whole life through:

For death is one, and the fates are three.  
At the door of life, by the gate of breath,  
There are worse things waiting for men  
than death;  
Death could not sever my soul and you,  
As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to the chance  
they sent you,  
Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer,  
But will it not one day in heaven repent  
you?

Will they solace you wholly, the days that were?  
Will you lift up your eyes between sadness and bliss,  
Meet mine, and see where the great love is,  
And tremble and turn and be changed?  
Content you;

The gate is strait; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched hand,  
Had you seen good such a thing were done,  
I too might have stood with the souls that stand  
In the sun's sight, clothed with the light of the sun;

But who now on earth need care how I live?  
Have the high gods anything left to give,  
Save dust and laurels and gold and sand?  
Which gifts are goodly: but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,  
There is none of you, none, that shall comfort me.  
My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked and whirled

Round and round in a gulf of the sea;  
And still, through the sound and the straining stream,  
Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a dream,  
The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,  
And strange swift eyes where the soul sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,  
Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.  
Would I have you change now, change at a blow,

Startled and stricken, awake and aware?  
Yea, if I could, would I have you see  
My very love of you filling me,  
And know my soul to the quick, as I know  
The likeness and look of your throat and hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I might,  
Would I change my sweet one love with a word?

I had rather your hair should change in a night,  
Clear now as the plume of a black bright bird;

Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn grey,  
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.  
I will keep my soul in a place out of sight,  
Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,  
Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.  
I have woven a veil for the weeping face,  
Whose lips have drunken the wine of tears:

I have found a way for the failing feet,  
A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;  
There is no rumour about the place,  
Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and said

"Let none take pity upon thee, none  
Comfort thy crying; for lo, thou art dead,  
Lie still now, safe out of sight of the sun.

Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought  
Thy grave-clothes on thee of grievous thought,  
With soft spun verses and tears unshed,  
And sweet light visions of things undone?

"I have given thee garments and balm and myrrh,

And gold, and beautiful burial things.  
But thou, be at peace now, make no stir;  
Is not thy grave as a royal king's?  
Fret not thyself though the end were sore;

Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.  
Sleep, what hast thou to do with her?  
The eyes that weep, with the mouth that sings?"

Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,  
The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,

The misconceived and the misbegotten,  
I would find a sin to do ere I die,

Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,  
That would set you higher in heaven, serve  
you

And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,  
As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns  
through me,

I am swift to follow you, keen to see;  
But love lacks might to redeem or undo  
me;

As I have been, I know I shall surely  
be;

"What should such fellows as I do?" Nay,  
My part were worse if I chose to play:  
For the worst is this after all; if they  
knew me,

Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these; but you,  
If you saw with your soul what man  
am I,

You would praise me at least that my soul  
all through

Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie;  
The souls and lips that are bought and  
sold,

The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,  
The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,  
The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear; that may  
be;

But I, that I love you and find you fair,  
Who are more than fair in my eyes if they  
be,

Do the high gods know or the great  
gods care?

Though the swords in my heart for one  
were seven,

Would the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,  
That knows not itself whether night-time or  
day be,

Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,  
Mother and lover of men, the sea.

I will go down to her, I and none other,  
Close with her, kiss her and mix her  
with me;

Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast:  
O fair white mother, in days long past  
Born without sister, born without brother,  
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,  
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and  
the rain,

Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like  
wine,

Thy large embraces are keen like pain.  
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,  
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,  
Those pure cold populous graves of thine  
Wrought without hand in a world with-  
out stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving  
ships,

Change as the winds change, veer in the  
tide;

My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,  
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee  
subsidi;

Sleep, and not know if she be, if she  
were,

Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,  
As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips  
With splendid summer and perfume and  
pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,  
Were it once cast off and unwound from  
me,

Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,  
Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;  
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,  
Clothed with the green and crowned with  
the foam,

A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,  
A vein in the heart of the streams of  
the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,  
Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men  
say.

Thou hast taken, and shalt not render  
again;

Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as  
they.

But death is the worst that comes of thee;  
Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O  
sea,

But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or  
when,

Having given us love, hast thou taken  
away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,  
Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine  
heart.

The hopes that hurt and the dreams that  
hover,

Shall they not vanish away and apart?  
But thou, thou art sure, thou art older  
than earth;

Thou art strong for death and fruitful of  
birth;

Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs dis-  
cover;

From the first thou wert; in the end  
thou art.

And grief shall endure not for ever, I  
know.

As things that are not shall these things  
be;

We shall live through seasons of sun and  
of snow,

And none be grievous as this to me.

We shall hear, as one in a trance that  
hears,  
The sound of time, the rhyme of the  
years;  
Wrecked hope and passionate pain will  
grow  
As tender things of a spring-tide sea.  
Sea-fruit that swings in the waves that  
hiss,  
Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.  
And all time past, was it all for this?  
Times unforgotten, and treasures of  
things?  
Swift years of liking and sweet long  
laughter,  
That wist not well of the years thereafter  
Till love woke, smitten at heart by a  
kiss,  
With lips that trembled and trailing  
wings?

There lived a singer in France of old  
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.  
In a land of sand and ruin and gold  
There shone one woman, and none but  
she.  
And finding life for her love's sake fail,  
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,  
Touched land, and saw her as life grew  
cold,  
And praised God, seeing; and so died he.  
Died, praising God for his gift and grace:  
For she bowed down to him weeping,  
and said  
"Live;" and her tears were shed on his  
face  
Or ever the life in his face was shed.  
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and  
stung  
Once, and her close lips touched him and  
clung  
Once, and drew one with his lips for a  
space;  
And so drew back, and the man was  
dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.  
Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.  
Be well content as the years wear through;  
Give thanks for life, and the loves and  
lures;  
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death.  
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her  
breath,  
For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,  
Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.  
Rest, and be glad of the gods; but I,  
How shall I praise them, or how take  
rest?  
There is not room under all the sky  
For me that know not of worst or best,  
Dream or desire of the days before,  
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.

Love will not come to me now though I  
die,  
As love came close to you, breast to  
breast.  
I shall never be friends again with roses;  
I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note  
grown strong  
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,  
As a wave of the sea turned back by  
song.  
There are sounds where the soul's delight  
takes fire,  
Face to face with its own desire;  
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;  
I shall hate sweet music my whole life  
long.  
The pulse of war and passion of wonder,  
The heavens that murmur, the sounds  
that shine,  
The stars that sing and the loves that  
thunder,  
The music burning at heart like wine,  
An armed archangel whose hands raise up  
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup  
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—  
These things are over, and no more  
mine.  
These were a part of the playing I heard  
Once, ere my love and my heart were at  
strife;  
Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,  
Balm of the wound and heft of the  
knife.  
Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep  
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,  
Now time has done with his one sweet  
word,  
The wine and leaven of lovely life.  
I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,  
Fill' the days of my daily breath  
With fugitive things not good to treasure,  
Do as the world doth, say as it saith;  
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,  
Had you felt, lying under the palms of  
your feet,  
The heart of my heart, beating harder with  
pleasure  
To feel you tread it to dust and death—  
Ah, had I not taken my life up and given  
All that life gives and the years let go,  
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,  
The dreams reared high and the hopes  
brought low?  
Come life, come death, not a word be  
said;  
Should I lose you living, and vex you  
dead?  
I never shall tell you on earth; and in  
heaven,  
If I cry to you then, will you hear or  
know?

## A LEAVE-TAKING

[1866.]

LET US go hence, my songs: she will not hear.

Let us go hence together without fear;  
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,  
And over all old things and all things dear.  
She loves not you nor me as all we love her.

Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,  
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part; she will not know.  
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,  
Full of blown sand and foam; what help is here?

There is no help, for all these things are so,  
And all the world is bitter as a tear.  
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,  
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence: she will not weep.

We gave love many dreams and days to keep,  
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,  
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle, and reap."

All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow:  
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,

She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest: she will not love,  
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,  
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.

Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.  
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;  
And though she saw all heaven in flower above,

She would not love.

Let us give up, go down: she will not care.  
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,

And the sea moving saw before it move  
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;  
Though all those waves went over us, and drove

Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,

She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence: she will not see.  
Sing all once more together; surely she,  
She too, remembering days and words that were,

Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,

*whilst the flowers.  
Maudite adopt this print.*

We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.

Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,

She would not see.

## HYMN TO PROSERPINE

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH)

[1866.]

VICISTI, GALILÆE

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end; Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.

Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep; For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.

Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove; But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.

Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold, A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?

I am sick of singing; the bays burn deep and chafe; I am fain

To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.

For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath, We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.

O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!

From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.

New Gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken your rods; They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.

But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;

Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.

Time and the Gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof, Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.

I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,

Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease, Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,

The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breasts of the nymphs in the brake: Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;

And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;

All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,  
 Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.  
 More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?  
 Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.  
 A little while and we die: shall life not thrive as it may?  
 For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.  
 And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:  
 Why should he labour, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?  
 Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath;  
 We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness of death.  
 Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;  
 But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.  
 Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;  
 For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.  
 Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;  
 But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.  
 O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!  
 O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!  
 Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,  
 I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.  
 All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast  
 Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:  
 Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,  
 Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:  
 Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,  
 And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,  
 White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curved,  
 Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.  
 The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;  
 In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;  
 In its sides is the north-wind bound: and its salt is of all men's tears;  
 With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:

With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;  
 And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:  
 And its vapour and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;  
 And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:  
 And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars of the air:  
 And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.  
 Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?  
 Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?  
 All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past:  
 Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.  
 In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,  
 Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.  
 Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,  
 Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,  
 Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden her head.  
 Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.  
 Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;  
 Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.  
 Yea, once we had sight of another; but now she is queen, say these.  
 Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,  
 Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,  
 And fleetier than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.  
 For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,  
 Her deep hair heavily laden with odour and colour of flowers,  
 White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendour, a flame,  
 Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.  
 For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she  
 Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.  
 And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,  
 And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.

Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token?  
    we wist that ye should not fall.  
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and  
    one more fair than ye all.  
But I turn to her still, having seen she  
    shall surely abide in the end;  
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me  
    now and befriend.  
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her  
    crown and blossom of birth,  
I am also, I also, thy brother: I go as I  
    came unto earth.  
In the night where thine eyes are as moons  
    are in heaven, the night where thou  
art,  
Where the silence is more than all tunes,  
    where sleep overflows from the heart,  
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose  
    in our world, and the red rose is white,  
And the wind falls faint as it blows with  
    the fume of the flowers of the night,  
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the  
    shadow of Gods from afar  
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the  
    deep dim soul of a star,  
In the sweet low light of thy face, under  
    heavens untrod by the sun,  
Let my soul with their souls find place,  
    and forget what is done and undone.  
Thou art more than the Gods who number  
    the days of our temporal breath;  
For these give labour and slumber; but thou,  
    Proserpina, death.  
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a  
    season in silence. I know  
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as  
    they sleep; even so.  
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein  
    we gaze for a span;  
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse  
    which is man.  
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not  
    again, neither weep.  
For there is no God found stronger than  
    death; and death is a sleep.

*frontal influence*

### A MATCH

[1866.] *carries*

If love were what the rose is,  
    And I were like the leaf,  
Our lives would grow together  
    In sad or singing weather,  
Blown fields or flowerful closes,  
    Green pleasure or grey grief;  
If love were what the rose is,  
    And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,  
    And love were like the tune,  
With double sound and single  
    Delight our lips would mingle,

*should it  
depict sound  
to meaning*

With kisses glad as birds are  
    That get sweet rain at noon;  
If I were what the words are,  
    And love were like the tune.  
If you were life, my darling,  
    And I your love were death,  
We'd shine and snow together  
    Ere March made sweet the weather  
With daffodil and starling  
    And hours of fruitful breath;  
If you were life, my darling,  
    And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,  
    And I were page to joy,  
We'd play for lives and seasons  
    With loving looks and treasons  
And tears of night and Morrow  
    And laughs of maid and boy;  
If you were thrall to sorrow,  
    And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,  
    And I were lord in May,  
We'd throw with leaves for hours  
    And draw for days with flowers,  
Till day like night were shady  
    And night were bright like day;  
If you were April's lady,  
    And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,  
    And I were king of pain,  
We'd hunt down love together,  
    Pluck out his flying-feather,  
And teach his feet a measure,  
    And find his mouth a rein;  
If you were queen of pleasure,  
    And I were king of pain.

### IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

[1866.]

BACK to the flower-town, side by side,  
    The bright months bring,  
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,  
    Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,  
    Filled full of sun;  
All things come back to her, being free,—  
    All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot  
    Flowers that were dead  
Live, and old suns revive; but not  
    That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,  
    Far north, I hear  
One face shall never turn to me  
    As once this year;

Shall never smile and turn and rest  
On mine as there,  
Nor one most sacred hand be pressed  
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,  
Half run before;  
The youngest to the oldest singer  
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find  
Till all grief end,  
In holiest age our mightiest mind,  
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,  
If hope there be,  
O spirit that man's life left pure,  
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were  
Look earthward now:  
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,  
The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life  
Where thou art not  
We find none like thee. Time and strife  
And the world's lot

Move thee no more; but love at least,  
And reverent heart,  
May move thee, royal and released  
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust  
Receive and keep,  
Keep safe his dedicated dust,  
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,  
Mix with thy name  
As morning-star with evening-star  
His faultless fame.

### BEFORE DAWN

[1866.]

SWEET life, if life were stronger,  
Earth clear of years that wrong her,  
Then two things might live longer,  
Two sweeter things than they;  
Delight, the rootless flower,  
And love, the bloomless bower;  
Delight that lives an hour,  
And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,  
When April melts in Maytime,  
Love lengthens out his playtime,  
Love lessens breath by breath,  
And kiss by kiss grows older  
On listless throat or shoulder  
Turned sideways now, turned colder  
Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving  
Life gave, and seemed worth living;  
Sin sweet beyond forgiving  
And brief beyond regret:  
To laugh and love together  
And weave with foam and feather  
And wind and words the tether  
Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,  
One thread in life worth spinning,  
Ah sweet, one sin worth sinning  
With all the whole soul's will;  
To lull you till one stilled you,  
To kiss you till one killed you,  
To feed you till one filled you,  
Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him  
Between white arms and bosom,  
Between the bud and blossom,  
Between your throat and chin;  
To say of shame—what is it?  
Of virtue—we can miss it,  
Of sin—we can but kiss it,  
And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken  
Through fleshly pulses, quicken  
Beneath sweet sighs that thicken,  
Soft hands and lips that smite;  
Lips that no love can tire,  
With hands that sting like fire,  
Weaving the web Desire  
To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,  
Our love with torch unlighted,  
Paused near us unaffrighted,  
Who found and left him free;  
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,  
Will weep or laugh or wonder;  
Light love stands clear of thunder,  
And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning  
Of dying lights and dawning,  
Night murmurs to the morning,  
"Lie still, O love, lie still;"  
And half her dark limbs cover  
The white limbs of her lover,  
With amorous plumes that hover  
And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses  
Night's void and vain caresses,  
And from her cloudier tresses  
Unwinds the gold of his,  
With limbs from limbs dividing  
And breath by breath subsiding;  
For love has no abiding,  
But dies before the kiss;

So hath it been, so be it;  
For who shall live and flee it?  
But look that no man see it  
Or hear it unaware;

Lest all who love and choose him  
See Love, and so refuse him;  
For all who find him lose him,  
But all have found him fair.

## THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

[1866.]

HERE, where the world is quiet;  
Here, where all trouble seems  
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot  
In doubtful dreams of dreams;  
I watch the green field growing  
For reaping folk and sowing,  
For harvest-time and mowing,  
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,  
And men that laugh and weep;  
Of what may come hereafter  
For men that sow to reap:  
I am weary of days and hours,  
Blown buds of barren flowers,  
Desires and dreams and powers  
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbour,  
And far from eye or ear  
Wan waves and wet winds labour,  
Weak ships and spirits steer;  
They drive adrift, and whither  
They wot not who make thither;  
But no such winds blow hither,  
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,  
No heather-flower or vine,  
But bloomless buds of poppies,  
Green grapes of Proserpine,  
Pale beds of blowing rushes  
Where no leaf blooms or blushes  
Save this whereout she crushes  
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,  
In fruitless fields of corn,  
They bow themselves and slumber  
All night till light is born;  
And like a soul belated,  
In hell and heaven unmated,  
By cloud and mist abated  
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,  
He too with death shall dwell,  
Nor wake with wings in heaven,  
Nor weep for pains in hell;  
Though one were fair as roses,  
His beauty clouds and closes;  
And well though love reposes,  
In the end it is not well.  
  
Pale, beyond porch and portal,  
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands  
Who gathers all things mortal  
With cold immortal hands;

Her languid lips are sweeter  
Than love's who fears to greet her  
To men that mix and meet her  
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,  
She waits for all men born;  
Forgets the earth her mother,  
The life of fruits and corn;  
And spring and seed and swallow  
Take wing for her and follow  
Where summer song rings hollow  
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,  
The old loves with wearier wings;  
And all dead years draw thither,  
And all disastrous things;  
Dead dreams of days forsaken,  
Blind buds that snows have shaken,  
Wild leaves that winds have taken,  
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,  
And joy was never sure;  
To-day will die to-morrow;  
Time stoops to no man's lure;  
And love, grown faint and fretful,  
With lips but half regretful  
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful  
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,  
From hope and fear set free,  
We thank with brief thanksgiving  
Whatever gods may be  
That no life lives for ever;  
That dead men rise up never;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,  
Nor any change of light:  
Nor sound of waters shaken,  
Nor any sound or sight:  
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,  
Nor days nor things diurnal;  
Only the sleep eternal  
In an eternal night.

## HESPERIA

[1866.]

OUT of the golden remote wild west where  
the sea without shore is,  
Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with  
the fulness of joy,  
As a wind sets in with the autumn that  
blows from the region of stories,  
Blows with a perfume of songs and of  
memories beloved from a boy,  
Blows from the capes of the past oversea  
to the bays of the present,  
Filled as with shadow of sound with the  
pulse of invisible feet,

Far out to the shallows and straits of the future, by rough ways or pleasant,  
Is it thither the wind's wings beat? is it hither to me, O my sweet?  
For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-wind blowing in with the water,  
Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the wind from the west,  
Straight from the sunset, across white waves whence rose as a daughter  
Venus thy mother, in years when the world was a water at rest.  
Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream that abides after slumber,  
Strayed from the fugitive flock of the night, when the moon overhead  
Wanes in the wan waste heights of the heaven, and stars without number  
Die without sound, and are spent like lamps that are burnt by the dead,  
Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me with touch of forgotten caresses,  
One warm dream clad about with a fire as of life that endures;  
The delight of thy face, and the sound of thy feet, and the wind of thy tresses,  
And all of a man that regrets, and all of a maid that allures.  
But thy bosom is warm for my face and profound as a manifold flower,  
Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odour that fades in a flame;  
Not a dream, not a dream is the kiss of thy mouth, and the bountiful hour  
That makes me forget what was sin, and would make me forget were it shame.  
Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that are tender, thy lips that are loving,  
Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn of a moon like a dream;  
And my heart yearns baffled and blind, moved vainly toward thee, and moving  
As the refluent seaweed moves in the languid exuberant stream,  
Fair as a rose is on earth, as a rose under water in prison,  
That stretches and swings to the slow passionate pulse of the sea,  
Closed up from the air and the sun, but alive, as a ghost rearisen,  
Pale as the love that revives as a ghost rearisen in me.  
From the bountiful infinite west, from the happy memorial places  
Full of the stately repose and the lordly delight of the dead,  
Where the fortunate islands are lit with the light of ineffable faces,  
And the sound of a sea without wind is about them, and sunset is red,  
Come back to redeem and release me from love that recalls and represses,

That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till the serpent has eaten his fill;  
From the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish, the furtive caresses  
That murder the youth in a man or ever his heart have its will.  
Thy lips cannot laugh and thine eyes cannot weep; thou art pale as a rose is,  
Paler and sweeter than leaves that cover the blush of the bud;  
And the heart of the flower is compassion, and pity the core it encloses,  
Pity, not love, that is born of the breath and decays with the blood.  
As the cross that a wild nun clasps till the edge of it bruises her bosom,  
So love wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and burns as a flame;  
I have loved overmuch in my life; when the live bud bursts with the blossom,  
Bitter as ashes or tears is the fruit, and the wine thereof shame.  
As a heart that its anguish divides is the green bud cloven asunder;  
As the blood of a man self-slain is the flush of the leaves that allure;  
And the perfume as poison and wine to the brain, a delight and a wonder;  
And the thorns are too sharp for a boy, too slight for a man, to endure.  
Too soon did I love it, and lost love's rose; and I cared not for glory's:  
Only the blossoms of sleep and of pleasure were mixed in my hair.  
Was it myrtle or poppy thy garland was woven with, O my Dolores?  
Was it pallor of slumber, or blush as of blood, that I found in thee fair?  
For desire is a respite from love, and the flesh not the heart is her fuel;  
She was sweet to me once, who am fled and escaped from the rage of her reign;  
Who behold as of old time at hand as I turn, with her mouth growing cruel,  
And flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers, Our Lady of Pain.  
Low down where the thicket is thicker with thorns than with leaves in the summer,  
In the brake is a gleaming of eyes and a hissing of tongues that I knew;  
And the lithe long throats of her snakes reach round her, their mouths overcome her,  
And her lips grow cool with their foam, made moist as a desert with dew.  
With the thirst and the hunger of lust though her beautiful lips be so bitter,  
With the cold foul foam of the snakes they soften and redder and smile;  
And her fierce mouth sweetens, her eyes wax wide and her eyelashes glitter,  
And she laughs with a savour of blood in her face, and a savour of guile.

She laughs, and her hands reach hither, her hair blows hither and hisses,  
As a low-lit flame in a wind, back-blown till it shudder and leap;  
Let her lips not again lay hold on my soul, nor her poisonous kisses,  
To consume it alive and divide from thy bosom, Our Lady of Sleep.  
Ah daughter of sunset and slumber, if now it return into prison,  
Who shall redeem it anew? but we, if thou wilt, let us fly;  
Let us take to us, now that the white skies thrill with a moon unarisen,  
Swift horses of fear or of love, take flight and depart and not die.  
They are swifter than dreams, they are stronger than death; there is none that hath ridden,  
None that shall ride in the dim strange ways of his life as we ride;  
By the meadows of memory, the highlands of hope, and the shore that is hidden, Where life breaks loud and unseen, a sonorous invisible tide;  
By the sands where sorrow has trodden, the salt pools bitter and sterile,  
By the thundering reef and the low seawall and the channel of years, Our wild steeds press on the night, strain hard through pleasure and peril,  
Labour and listen and pant not or pause for the peril that nears;  
And the sound of them trampling the way cleaves night as an arrow asunder,  
And slow by the sand-hill and swift by the down with its glimpses of grass, Sudden and steady the music, as eight hoofs trample and thunder,  
Rings in the ear of the low blind wind of the night as we pass;  
Shrill shrieks in our faces the blind bland air that was mute as a maiden, Stung into storm by the speed of our passage, and deaf where we past;  
And our spirits too burn as we bound, thine holy but mine heavy-laden, As we burn with the fire of our flight; ah love, shall we win at the last?

## SAPPHICS

[1866.]

ALL the night sleep came not upon my eyelids, Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather, Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron  
Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,

Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,  
Full of the vision,  
Saw the white implacable Aphrodite, Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled  
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters; Saw the reluctant Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her, Looking always, looking with necks reverted,  
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder Shone Mitylene;  
Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her  
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters, As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing Wings of a great wind.  
So the goddess fled from her place, with awful Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;  
While behind a clamour of singing women Severed the twilight.  
Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion! All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,  
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;  
Fear was upon them,  
While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.  
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,  
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;  
Laurel by laurel,  
Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,  
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples  
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,  
Ravaged with kisses,  
Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.  
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song.  
Yea, by her name too  
Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"  
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not  
Tears for laughter darken immortal eye-lids,  
Heard not about her

*poem in foreign meter - consummate art.*

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,  
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite  
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken  
raiment,

Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their  
smitten  
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound  
of lute-strings,  
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her  
chosen,  
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,  
Full of songs and kisses and little whis-  
pers,  
Full of music; only beheld among them  
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,  
Made of perfect sound and exceeding pas-  
sion,  
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,  
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and  
scattered  
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;  
Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden  
faces  
Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at neart, were  
silent;  
Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was  
that song.  
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,  
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was  
barren,  
Full of fruitless women and music only.  
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged  
at sunset,  
Lulled at the dewfall,

By the grey sea-side, unassuaged, unheard-  
of,  
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,  
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,  
Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears,  
and singing  
Songs that move the heart of the shaken  
heaven,  
Songs that break the heart of the earth  
with pity,  
Hearing, to hear them.

DEDICATION:  
TO POEMS AND BALLADS  
[1866.]

THE sea gives her shells to the shingle,  
The earth gives her streams to the sea;  
They are many, but my gift is single,  
My verses, the firstfruits of me.  
Let the wind take the green and the grey  
leaf

Cast forth without fruit upon air;  
Take rose-leaf and vine-leaf and bay-leaf  
Blown loose from the hair.

The night shakes them round me in legions,  
Dawn drives them before her like  
dreams;  
Time sheds them like snows on strange  
regions  
Swept shoreward on infinite streams;  
Leaves pallid and sombre and ruddy,  
Dead fruits of the fugitive years;  
Some stained as with wine and made  
bloody,  
And some as with tears.

Some scattered in seven years' traces,  
As they fell from the boy that was  
then;  
Long left among idle green places,  
Or gathered but now among men;  
On seas full of wonder and peril,  
Blown white round the capes of the  
north;  
Or in islands where myrtles are sterile  
And loves bring not forth.

O daughters of dreams and of stories  
That life is not wearied of yet,  
Faustine, Fragoletta, Dolores,  
Féline and Yolande and Juliette,  
Shall I find you not still, shall I miss  
you,  
When sleep, that is true or that seems,  
Comes back to me hopeless to kiss you,  
O daughters of dreams?

They are past as a slumber that passes,  
As the dew of a dawn of old time;  
More frail than the shadows on glasses,  
More fleet than a wave or a rhyme.  
As the waves after ebb drawing seaward,  
When their hollows are full of the night  
So the birds that flew singing to me-ward  
Recede out of sight.

The songs of dead seasons, that wander  
On wings of articulate words;  
Lost leaves that the shore-wind may  
squander  
Light flocks of untameable birds;

Some sang to me dreaming in class-time  
And truant in hand as in tongue;  
For the youngest were born of boy's pastime,  
The eldest are young.

Is there shelter while life in them lingers,  
Is there hearing for songs that recede,  
Tunes touched from a harp with man's fingers

Or blown with boy's mouth in a reed?  
Is there place in the land of your labour,  
Is there room in your world of delight,  
Where change has not sorrow for neighbour

And day has not night?

In their wings though the sea-wind yet quivers

Will you spare not a space for them there

Made green with the running of rivers  
And gracious with temperate air;  
In the fields and the turreted cities,  
That cover from sunshine and rain  
Fair passions and bountiful pities  
And loves without stain?

In a land of clear colours and stories,  
In a region of shadowless hours,  
Where earth has a garment of glories  
And a murmur of musical flowers;  
In the woods where the spring half uncovers

The flush of her amorous face,  
By the waters that listen for lovers,  
For these is there place?

For the song-birds of sorrow, that muffle  
Their music as clouds do their fire:  
For the storm-birds of passion, that ruffle  
Wild wings in a wind of desire;  
In the stream of the storm as it settles  
Blown seaward, borne far from the sun,  
Shaken loose on the darkness like petals  
Dropt one after one?

Though the world of your hands be more gracious  
And the lovelier in lordship of things  
Clothed round by sweet art with the spacious

Warm heaven of her imminent wings,  
Let them enter, unfledged and nigh fainting,  
For the love of old loves and lost times;  
And receive in your palace of painting  
This revel of rhymes.

Though the seasons of man full of losses  
Make empty the years full of youth,  
If but one thing be constant in crosses,  
Change lays not her hand upon truth;  
Hopes die, and their tombs are for token  
That the grief as the joy of them ends  
Ere time that breaks all men has broken  
The faith between friends.

Though the many lights dwindle to one light,

There is help if the heaven has one;  
Though the skies be disrowned of the sunlight

And the earth dispossessed of the sun,  
They have moonlight and sleep for repayment,

When, refreshed as a bride and set free,  
With stars and sea-winds in her raiment,  
Night sinks on the sea.

### MATER DOLOROSA

[1871.]

Citoyen, lui dit Enjolras, ma mère, c'est la République.—Les Misérables

WHO is it that sits by the way, by the wild wayside,  
In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride,  
In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,  
With the night for a garment upon her, with torn wet hair?  
She is fairer of face than the daughters of men, and her eyes,  
Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen,  
for whose abject sake,  
Earth groans in the blackness of darkness,  
and men's hearts break.

This is she for whose love, having seen  
her, the men that were  
Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air.

This is she for whose glory their years  
were counted as foam;  
Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon Rome.

Is it now not surely a vain thing, a foolish  
and vain,

To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve  
her, partake in the pain?

She is gray with the dust of time on his manifold ways,

Where her faint feet stumble and falter  
through yearlong days.

Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit  
or give fame,

Who herself is a name despised, a rejected name?

We have not served her for guerdon. If any do so,

That his mouth may be sweet with such honey, we care not to know.

We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened,  
a perilous cup,

A draught very bitter. The kings of the earth stood up,

And the rulers took counsel together, to smite her and slay;  
 And the blood of her wounds is given us to drink to-day.  
 Can these bones live? or the leaves that are dead leaves bud?  
 Or the dead blood drawn from her veins be in your veins blood?  
 Will ye gather up water again that was drawn and shed?  
 In the blood is the life of the veins, and her veins are dead.  
 For the lives that are over are over, and past things past;  
 She had her day, and it is not; was first, and is last.

Is it nothing unto you, then, all ye that pass by,  
 If her breath be left in her lips, if she live now or die?  
 Behold now, O people, and say if she be not fair,  
 Whom your fathers followed to find her, with praise and prayer,  
 And rejoiced, having found her, though roof they had none, nor bread.  
 But ye care not: what is it to you if her day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their sound was in all men's lands;  
 There was fire in their hearts, and the hunger of fight in their hands.  
 Naked and strong they went forth in her strength like flame,  
 For her love's and her name's sake of old, her republican name.  
 But their children, by kings made quiet, by priests made wise,  
 Love better the heat of their hearths than the light of her eyes.

Are they children of these thy children indeed, who have sold,  
 O golden goddess, the light of thy face for gold?  
 Are they sons indeed of the sons of thy dayspring of hope,  
 Whose lives are in fief of an emperor, whose souls of a Pope?  
 Hide then thine head, O beloved! thy time is done;  
 Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, and blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream she indeed shall rise,  
 When the hopes are dead in her heart as the tears in her eyes?  
 If ye sing of her dead, will she stir? if ye weep for her, weep?  
 Come away now, leave her: what hath she to do but sleep?

But ye that mourn are alive, and have years to be;  
 And life is good, and the world is wiser than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with years to give,  
 And years to promise; but how long now shall it live?  
 And foolish and poor is faith, and her ways are bare,  
 Till she find the way of the sun, and the morning air.  
 In that hour shall this dead face shine as the face of the sun,  
 And the soul of man and her soul and the world's be one.

## FROM MATER TRIUMPHALIS

[TO LIBERTY.]

[1871.]

I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother!  
 All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.  
 We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other  
 Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of the sober-suited, Who loves a little for a little pay.  
 Me not thy winds and storms, nor thrones disrooted,  
 Nor molten crowns, nor thine own sins, dismay.

Sinned has thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless;  
 Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain;  
 Even as a man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless  
 Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother!  
 I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.  
 How were it with me then, if ever another Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion, Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;  
 The graves of souls born worms, and creeds grown carrion  
 Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are  
thunders,

And I, beneath thy foot, the pedal prest;  
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night  
sunders,

And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,  
As haze in sunrise on the red sealine;  
But thou from dawn to sunsetting shalt  
cherish

The thoughts that led and souls that  
lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth  
and error,  
Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and  
screams

Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror  
The imperious heaven's inevitable ex-  
tremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers  
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;  
I keep no time of song with gold-perched  
singers

And chirp of linnets on the wrists of  
kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that  
darken,

Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy  
bark

To port through night and tempest: if thou  
hearken,

My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy  
morning,

My cry is up before the day for thee;  
I have heard thee and beheld thee and  
give warning,

Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and  
feathered fairer,

To see in summer what I see in spring:  
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O  
thunder-bearer,

And they shall be who shall have tongues  
to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and  
part not

From thine unnavigable and wingless  
way;

Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou  
art not,

Nor all thy night long have denied thy  
day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,  
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,  
With wind-notes as of eagles Æscylean,  
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and  
daughters,  
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep  
but one,—

That supreme song which shook the chan-  
nelled waters,  
And called thee skyward as God calls  
the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above  
thee;

Though death before thee come to clear  
thy sky;

Let us but see in this thy face who love  
thee;

Yea, though thou slay us, arise, and let  
us die.

### COR CORDIUM

[1871.]

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's  
fire,  
Hid round with flowers and all the  
bounty of bloom;

O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom  
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;

O heavenly heart, at whose most dear  
desire

Dead love, living and singing, cleft his  
tomb,

And with him risen and regent in death's  
room

All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;

O heart whose beating blood was running  
song,

O sole thing sweeter than thine own  
songs were,

Help us for thy free love's sake to be  
free,

True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's  
sake strong,

Till very liberty make clean and fair  
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

### HERTHA

[1871.]

I AM that which began;  
Out of me the years roll;  
Out of me God and man;  
I am equal and whole;  
God changes, and man, and the form of  
them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,  
Before ever the sea,  
Or soft hair of the grass,  
Or fair limbs of the tree,  
Or the flesh-coloured fruit of my branches,  
I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources  
 First drifted and swam;  
 Out of me are the forces  
 That save it or damn;  
 Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast  
 and bird; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me  
 Nought is there to go;  
 Love or unlove me,  
 Unknow me or know,  
 I am that which unloves me and loves; I  
 am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed  
 And the arrows that miss,  
 I the mouth that is kissed  
 And the breath in the kiss,  
 The search, and the sought, and the seeker,  
 the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses  
 My spirit elate;  
 That which caresses  
 With hands uncreate  
 My limbs unbegotten that measure the  
 length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,  
 Looking Godward, to cry  
 "I am I, thou art thou,  
 I am low, thou art high"?  
 I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him;  
 find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,  
 The plough-cloven clod  
 And the ploughshare drawn thorough,  
 The germ and the sod,  
 The deed and the doer, the seed and the  
 sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,  
 Child, underground?  
 Fire that impassioned thee,  
 Iron that bound,  
 Dim changes of water, what thing of all  
 these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart  
 Thou hast seen with thine eyes  
 With what cunning of art  
 Thou wast wrought in what wise,  
 By what force of what stuff thou wast  
 shapen, and shown on my breast to  
 the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,  
 Knowledge of me?  
 Hath the wilderness told it thee?  
 Hast thou learnt of the sea?  
 Hast thou communed in spirit with night?  
 have the winds taken counsel with  
 thee?

Have I set such a star  
 To show light on thy brow  
 That thou sawest from afar  
 What I show to thee now?  
 Have ye spoken as brethren together, the  
 sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?  
 What was, hast thou known?  
 Prophet nor poet  
 Nor tripod nor throne  
 Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but  
 only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,  
 Born, and not made;  
 Though her children forsake her,  
 Allured or afraid,  
 Praying prayers to the God of their fashion,  
 she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,  
 And a crown is of night;  
 But this thing is God,  
 To be man with thy might,  
 To grow straight in the strength of thy  
 spirit, and live out thy life as the  
 light.

I am in thee to save thee,  
 As my soul in thee saith;  
 Give thou as I gave thee,  
 Thy life-blood and breath,  
 Green leaves of thy labour, white flowers  
 of thy thought, and red fruit of thy  
 death.

Be the ways of thy giving  
 As mine were to thee;  
 The free life of thy living,  
 Be the gift of it free;  
 Not as servant to lord, nor as master to  
 slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,  
 Souls overcast,  
 Were the lights ye see vanish meant  
 Alway to last,  
 Ye would know not the sun overshining  
 the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod  
 The dim paths of the night  
 Set the shadow called God  
 In your skies to give light;  
 But the morning of manhood is risen, and  
 the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted  
 That swells to the sky  
 With frondage red-fruited,  
 The life-tree am I;  
 In the buds of your lives is the sap of my  
 leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion  
That take and that give  
In their pity and passion  
That scourge and forgive  
They are worms that are bred in the bark  
that falls off; they shall die and not  
live.

My own blood is what stanches  
The wounds in my bark;  
Stars caught in my branches  
Make day of the dark,  
And are worshipped as suns till the sun-  
rise shall tread out their fires as a  
spark.  
Where dead ages hide under  
The live roots of the tree,  
In my darkness the thunder  
Makes utterance of me;  
In the clash of my boughs with each other  
ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,  
As his feathers are spread  
And his feet set to climb  
Through the boughs overhead,  
And my foliage rings round him and rus-  
tles, and branches are bent with his  
tread.  
The storm-winds of ages  
Blow through me and cease,  
The war-wind that rages,  
The spring-wind of peace,  
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses,  
ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,  
All shadows and lights  
On the world's mountain-ranges  
And stream-riven heights,  
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and  
language of storm-clouds on earth-  
shaking nights;  
All forms of all faces,  
All works of all hands  
In unsearchable places  
Of time-stricken lands,  
All death and all life, and all reigns and  
all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden  
And more than ye know,  
And my growth have no guerdon  
But only to grow,  
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings  
above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,  
As I too in these;  
Such fire is at heart in me,  
Such sap is this tree's,  
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets  
of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-coloured hours  
When my mind was as May's,  
There brake forth of me flowers  
By centuries of days,  
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood,  
shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing  
And smell of their shoots  
Were as warmth and sweet singing  
And strength to my roots;  
And the lives of my children made perfect  
with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;  
I have need not of prayer;  
I have need of you free  
As your mouths of mine air;  
That my heart may be greater within me,  
beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is  
Of faiths ye espouse;  
In me only the root is  
That blooms in your boughs;  
Behold now your God that ye made you,  
to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening  
Abysses adored,  
With dayspring and lightning  
For lamp and for sword,  
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are  
red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful  
Towards Gods not of me,  
Was not I enough beautiful?  
Was it hard to be free?  
For behold, I am with you, am in you and  
of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,  
With miracles shod,  
With the fires of his thunders  
For raiment and rod,  
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are  
white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,  
His anguish is here;  
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,  
Grown grey from his fear;  
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken,  
the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,  
Truth slays and forgives;  
But to you, as time takes him,  
This new thing it gives,  
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds  
upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,  
Truth only is whole,  
And the love of his giving  
Man's polestar and pole;  
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my  
body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;  
One beam of mine eye;  
One topmost blossom  
That scales the sky;  
Man, equal and one with me, man that is  
made of me, man that is I.

## THE PILGRIMS

[1871.]

"Who is your lady of love, O ye that pass  
Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which  
was

That ye sing sadly, or dream of what  
shall be?

For gladly at once and sadly it seems  
ye sing."

— "Our lady of love by you is un beholden;  
For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor  
lips, nor golden

Treasure of hair, nor face nor form;  
but we

That love, we know her more fair than  
anything."

— "Is she a queen, having great gifts to  
give?"

— "Yea, these: that whoso hath seen her  
shall not live

Except he serve her sorrowing, with  
strange pain,

Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer  
tears;

And when she bids die he shall surely die.  
And he shall leave all things under the sky,

And go forth naked under sun and rain,  
And work and wait and watch out all  
his years."

— "Hath she on earth no place of habita-  
tion?"

— "Age to age calling, nation answering  
nation,

Cries out, Where is she? and there is  
none to say;

For if she be not in the spirit of men,  
For if in the inward soul she hath no  
place,

In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face,  
In vain their mouths make much of her;  
for they

Cry with vain tongues, till the heart  
lives again."

— "O ye that follow, and have ye no re-  
pentance?

For on your brows is written a mortal  
sentence,

An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign,  
That in your lives ye shall not pause  
or rest,  
Nor have the sure sweet common love,  
nor keep  
Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor  
sleep."

— "These have we not, who have one  
thing, the divine  
Face and clear eyes of faith and fruit-  
ful breast."

— "And ye shall die before your thrones be  
won."

— "Yea, and the changed world and the

liberal sun  
Shall move and shine without us, and  
we lie

Dead; but if she too move on earth,  
and live,

But if the old world with all the old irons  
rent

Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not  
content?

Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,  
Life being so little, and death so good  
to give."

— "And these men shall forget you." —

— "Yea, but we  
Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient

sea,  
And heaven-high air august, and awful  
fire,

And all things good; and no man's  
heart shall beat

But somewhat in it of our blood once shed  
Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the  
dead

Blood of men slain and the old same  
life's desire

Plants in their fiery footprints our  
fresh feet."

— "But ye that might be clothed with all  
things pleasant,

Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft  
present,

That clothe yourselves with the cold fu-  
ture air;

When mother and father and tender  
sister and brother

And the old live love that was shall be as  
ye,

Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be."

— "She shall be yet who is more than all  
these were,

Than sister or wife or father unto us  
or mother."

— "Is this worth life, is this, to win for  
wages?

Lo, the dead mouths of the awful gray-

grown ages,

The venerable, in the past that is their prison,  
 In the outer darkness, in the unopening grave,  
 Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say have said,  
 How many, and all are fallen, are fallen and dead:  
 Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have not risen?"  
 —"Not we but she, who is tender, and swift to save."

—"Are ye not weary and faint not by the way,  
 Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,  
 Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire?  
 Sleepless; and ye too, when shall ye too sleep?"  
 —"We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,  
 And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,—  
 Than all things save the inexorable desire  
 Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep."

—"Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow?  
 Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow,  
 Even this your dream, that by much tribulation  
 Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks straight?"  
 —"Nay, though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,  
 Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless;  
 But man to man, nation would turn to nation,  
 And the old life live, and the old great word be great."

—"Pass on, then, and pass by us, and let us be,  
 For what light think ye after life to see?  
 And if the world fare better will ye know?  
 And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?"  
 —"Enough of light is this for one life's span,  
 That all men born are mortal, but not man;  
 And we men bring death lives by night to sow,  
 That men may reap and eat and live by day."

## THE OBLATION

[1871.]

Ask nothing more of me, sweet;  
 All I can give you I give.  
 Heart of my heart, were it more,  
 More would be laid at your feet:  
 Love that should help you to live,  
 Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give  
 Once to have sense of you more,  
 Touch you and taste of you sweet,  
 Think you and breathe you and live,  
 Swept of your wings as they soar,  
 Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more  
 Give you but love of you, sweet:  
 He that hath more, let him give;  
 He that hath wings, let him soar;  
 Mine is the heart at your feet  
 Here, that must love you to live.

## THE SONG OF THE STANDARD

[1871.]

MAIDEN most beautiful, mother most bountiful, lady of lands,  
 Queen and republican, crowned of the centuries whose years are thy sands,  
 See for thy sake what we bring to thee,  
 Italy, here in our hands.

This is the banner thy gonfalon, fair in the front of thy fight,  
 Red from the hearts that were pierced for thee, white as thy mountains are white,  
 Green as the spring of thy soul everlasting,  
 whose life-blood is light.

Take to thy bosom thy banner, a fair bird fit for the nest,  
 Feathered for flight into sunrise or sunset, for eastward or west,  
 Fledged for the flight everlasting, but held yet warm to thy breast.

Gather it close to thee, song-bird or storm-bearer, eagle or dove,  
 Lift it to sunward, a beacon beneath to the beacon above,  
 Green as our hope in it, white as our faith in it, red as our love.

Thunder and splendour of lightning are hid in the folds of it furled;  
 Who shall unroll it but thou, as thy bolt to be handled and hurled,  
 Out of whose lips is the honey, whose bosom the milk of the world?

Out of thine hands hast thou fed us with  
pasture of colour and song;  
Glory and beauty by birthright to thee as  
thy garments belong;  
Out of thine hands thou shalt give us as  
surely deliverance from wrong.

Out of thine eyes thou hast shed on us  
love as a lamp in our night,  
Wisdom a lodestar to ships, and remem-  
brance a flame-coloured light;  
Out of thine eyes thou shalt show us as  
surely the sun-dawn of right.

Turn to us, speak to us, Italy, mother, but  
once and a word,  
None shall not follow thee, none shall not  
serve thee, not one that has heard;  
Twice hast thou spoken a message, and  
time is athirst for the third.

Kingdom and empire of peoples thou  
hadst, and thy lordship made one  
North sea and south sea and east men  
and west men that look on the sun;  
Spirit was in thee and counsel, when soul  
in the nations was none.

Banner and beacon thou wast to the cen-  
turies of storm-wind and foam,  
Ages that clashed in the dark with each  
other, and years without home;  
Empress and prophetess wast thou, and  
what wilt thou now be, O Rome?

Ah, by the faith and the hope and the  
love that have need of thee now,  
Shines not thy face with the forethought  
of freedom, and burns not thy brow?  
Who is against her but all men? and who  
is beside her but thou?

Art thou not better than all men? and  
where shall she turn but to thee?  
Lo, not a breath, not a beam, not a beacon  
from midland to sea;  
Freedom cries out for a sign among nations,  
and none will be free.

England in doubt of her, France in despair  
of her, all without heart—  
Stand on her side in the vanward of ages,  
and strike on her part!  
Strike but one stroke for the love of her  
love of thee, sweet that thou art!

Take in thy right hand thy banner, a  
strong staff fit for thine hand;  
Forth at the light of it lifted shall foul  
things flock from the land;  
Faster than stars from the sun shall they  
fly, being lighter than sand.

Green thing to green in the summer makes  
answer, and rose-tree to rose;  
Lily by lily the year becomes perfect; and  
none of us knows  
What thing is fairest of all things on earth  
as it brightens and blows.

This thing is fairest in all time of all  
things, in all time is best—  
Freedom, that made thee, our mother, and  
suckled her sons at thy breast;  
Take to thy bosom the nations, and there  
shall the world come to rest.

### A FORSAKEN GARDEN

[1878.]

In a coign of the cliff between lowland  
and highland,  
At the sea-down's edge between wind-  
ward and lee,  
Walled round with rocks as an inland  
island,  
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.  
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses  
The steep square slope of the blossomless  
bed  
Where the weeds that grew green from the  
graves of its roses  
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and  
broken,  
To the low last edge of the long lone  
land.  
If a step should sound or a word be  
spoken,  
Would a ghost not rise at the strange  
guest's hand?  
So long have the grey bare walks lain  
guestless,  
Through branches and briars if a man  
make way,  
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's,  
restless  
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled,  
That crawls by a track none turn to  
climb  
To the strait waste place that the years  
have rifled  
Of all but the thorns that are touched  
not of time.  
The thorns he spares when the rose is  
taken;  
The rocks are left when he wastes the  
plain.  
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-  
shaken,  
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot  
that falls not;  
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;  
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,  
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.  
Over the meadows that blossom and wither  
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song;  
Only the sun and the rain come hither  
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels  
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.  
Only the wind here hovers and revels  
In a round where life seems barren as death.  
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,  
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,  
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping  
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood,  
"Look thither,"  
Did he whisper? "look forth from the flowers to the sea;  
For the foam-flowers endure when rose-blossoms wither,  
And men that love lightly may die—but we?"  
And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,  
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,  
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,  
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?  
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?  
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,  
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.  
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?  
What love was ever as deep as a grave?  
They are loveless now as the grass above them

Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,  
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.  
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers  
In the air now soft with a summer to be.

Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter  
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,  
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter,  
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever:  
Here change may come not till all change end.  
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,  
Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.  
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,  
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be:  
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing  
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,  
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,  
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble  
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,  
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,  
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,  
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,  
Death lies dead.

#### A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

[1878.]

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,  
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;  
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,  
Under the roses I hid my heart.  
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,  
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?  
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,  
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;  
Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,  
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.  
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?

Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?

What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart?  
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,

It never was writ in the traveller's chart,  
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,

It never was sold in the merchant's mart.  
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,

And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;

No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,

Only the song of a secret bird.

#### ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,

To sleep for a season and hear no word  
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,  
Only the song of a secret bird.

#### AVE ATQUE VALE

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE  
Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;  
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,  
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres  
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs mabres;  
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.  
*Les Fleurs du Mal*

[1878.]

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,  
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?

Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,  
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,

Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,  
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?

Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,  
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat  
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet

To thee than gleanings of a northern shore  
Trod by no tropic feet?

For always thee the fervid languid glories  
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;  
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs

Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,

The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave  
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave

Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.

Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,  
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear

Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,

Blind gods that cannot spare.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,

Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:  
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,

Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;

The hidden harvest of luxurious time, Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;

And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep

Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;

And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,

Seeing as men sow men reap.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,

That were athirst for sleep and no more life

And no more love, for peace and no more strife!

Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping

Spirit and body and all the springs of song,

Is it well now where love can do no wrong,

Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang

Behind the unopening closure of her lips?

Is it not well where soul from body slips And flesh from bone divides without a pang

As dew from flower-bell drips?

It is enough; the end and the beginning Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.

O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend, For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,

No triumph and no labour and no lust, Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.

O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought, Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night With obscure finger silences your sight,

Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,

Sleep, and have sleep for light.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves  
are over,  
Dreams and desires and sombre songs  
and sweet,

Hast thou found place at the great knees  
and feet

Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,  
Such as thy vision here solicited,  
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,  
The deep division of prodigious breasts,  
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,  
The weight of awful tresses that still keep  
The savour and shade of old-world pine-  
forests

Where the wet hill-winds weep?

Hast thou found any likeness for thy  
vision?

O gardener of strange flowers, what bud,  
what bloom,  
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in  
the gloom?

What of despair, of rapture, of derision,  
What of life is there, what of ill or good?  
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright  
like blood?

Does the dim ground grow any seed of  
ours,

The faint fields quicken any terrene root,  
In low lands where the sun and moon are  
mute

And all the stars keep silence? Are there  
flowers

At all, or any fruit?

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,  
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more  
fleet

Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,  
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter  
From the blind tongueless warders of  
the dead,

Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's  
veiled head,

Some little sound of unregarded tears  
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,  
And from pale mouths some cadence of  
dead sighs—

These only, these the hearkening spirit  
hears,  
Sees only such things rise.

Thou art far too far for wings of words  
to follow,

Far too far off for thought or any prayer.  
What ails us with thee, who art wind and  
air?

What ails us gazing where ail seen is hol-  
low?

Yet with some fancy, yet with some  
desire,

Dreams pursue death as winds a flying  
fire,

Our dreams pursue our dead and do not  
find.

Still, and more swift than they, the thin  
flame flies,

The low light fails us in elusive skies,  
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and  
blind

Are still the eluded eyes.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's  
changes,

Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad  
soul,  
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut  
scroll

I lay my hand on, and not death estranges  
My spirit from communion of thy song—  
These memories and these melodies that  
throng

Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—  
These I salute, these touch, these clasp  
and fold

As though a hand were in my hand to  
hold,

Or through mine ears a mourning musical  
Of many mourners rolled.

I among these, I also, in such station  
As when the pyre was charred, and piled  
the sods,

And offering to the dead made, and their  
gods,

The old mourners had, standing to make  
libation,

I stand, and to the gods and to the dead  
Do reverence without prayer or praise,  
and shed

Offering to these unknown, the gods of  
gloom,

And what of honey and spice my seed-  
lands bear,

And what I may of fruits in this chilled  
air,

And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb  
A curl of severed hair.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,  
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the  
King,

The flame that made of Troy a ruinous  
thing,

Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could  
quicken

There fall no tears like theirs that all  
men hear

Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear

Down the opening leaves of holy poets'  
pages.

Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;  
But bending us-ward with memorial urns  
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages  
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often  
 Among us darkling here the lord of light  
 Makes manifest his music and his might  
 In hearts that open and in lips that soften  
 With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.  
 Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,  
 And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;  
 Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,  
 The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame  
 Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed  
 Who feeds our hearts with fame.  
 Therefore he too now at thy soul's sun-setting,  
 God of all suns and songs, he too bends down  
 To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,  
 And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.  
 Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,  
 Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,  
 Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,  
 And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs  
 Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,  
 And over thine irrevocable head  
 Sheds light from the under skies.  
 And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,  
 And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:  
 That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,  
 That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,  
 With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine  
 Long since, and face no more called Erycine  
 A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.  
 Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell  
 Did she, a sad and second prey, compel  
 Into the footless places once more trod,  
 And shadows hot from hell.  
 And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,  
 No choral salutation lure to light  
 A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night  
 And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom,

There is no help for these things; none to mend  
 And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,  
 Will make death clear or make life durable.  
 Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine  
 And with wild notes about this dust of thine  
 At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell  
 And wreath a unseen shrine.  
 Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,  
 If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;  
 And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.  
 Out of the mystic and the mournful garden  
 Where all day through thine hands in barren braid  
 Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,  
 Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,  
 Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,  
 Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,  
 Shall death not bring us all as thee one day  
 Among the days departed?  
 For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,  
 Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.  
 Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,  
 And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,  
 With sadder than the Niobeans womb,  
 And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.  
 Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;  
 There lies not any troublous thing before,  
 Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,  
 For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,  
 All waters as the shore.

• EVENING ON THE BROADS

[1880.]

OVER two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,  
 Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,  
 Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the sterile  
 Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by the night.

Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the breathless  
 Twilight: yonder the depths darken afar and asleep.  
 Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends on the deathless  
 Waters: hardly the light lives on the face of the deep—  
 Hardly, but here for awhile. All over the grey soft shallow  
 Hover the colours and clouds of the twilight, void of a star.  
 As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose winglets are callow  
 Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her brood from afar,  
 Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies with their blossom,  
 Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is encumbered with flowers.  
 World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth of her bosom,  
 Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as ours,  
 Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dissembles  
 Still with itself, being sick of division and dimmed by dismay—  
 Nay, not so; but with love and delight beyond passion it trembles,  
 Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of the day:  
 Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and begotten  
 Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of the grave:  
 Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not wholly forgotten,  
 Only not wholly suppressed by the dark as a wreck by the wave.  
 Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon, in a vision  
 Blindly beheld, but in vain: ghosts that are tired, and would rest.  
 But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense for division,  
 Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves in a nest.  
 Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season enkindled  
 Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair with the love of them fade:  
 Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and dwindled,  
 Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the night new-made.  
 New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasurable, endless.  
 Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,  
 In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless love of the friendless

Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of the sun depart.  
 Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters upholden  
 Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly for ever away—  
 Nay, not so, but at least for a little, awhile at the golden  
 Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.  
 Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope to the gleaming  
 Waste of the water without, waste of the water within,  
 Lights overhead and lights underneath seem doubtfully dreaming  
 Whether the day be done, whether the night may begin.  
 Far and afar and farther again they falter and hover,  
 Warm on the water and deep in the sky and pale on the cloud:  
 Colder again and slowly remoter, afraid to recover  
 Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the skirt of the shroud.  
 Faintly the heartbeats shorten and pause of the light in the westward  
 Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star upon star  
 Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to the breast-ward  
 Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the ways of them are,  
 Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the wealth of its wonder,  
 Fain of the night and the sea and the sweet wan face of the earth.  
 Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in them: under  
 Things are thrilled in their sleep as with sense of a sure new birth.  
 But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on the sea-line, stranger  
 Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge gazed on of me,  
 Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void though of danger,  
 Void not of menace, but full of the might of the dense dull sea.  
 Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank deep-drifted;  
 Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me, in front is the wave.  
 As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere is the girth of it lifted:  
 But the rampire of water in front is erect as the wall of a grave.  
 And the crests of it crumble and topple and change, but the wall is not broken:  
 Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my head,

Moving inland alway again, reared up as  
in token  
Still of impending wrath still in the foam  
of it shed.  
And even in the pauses between them, di-  
viding the rollers in sunder,  
High overhead seems ever the sea-line  
fixed as a mark,  
And the shore where I stand as a valley  
beholder of hills whence thunder  
Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening  
the depths of the dark.  
Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, up-  
ward from under  
Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after  
it here from the shore:  
A wall of turbid water, aslope to the wide  
sky's wonder  
Of colour and cloud, it climbs, or spreads  
as a slanted floor.  
And the large lights change on the face of  
the mere like things that were living,  
Winged and wonderful, beams like as  
birds are that pass and are free:  
But the light is dense as darkness, a gift  
withheld in the giving,  
That lies as dead on the fierce dull face  
of the landward sea.  
Stained and stifled and soiled, made earth-  
ier than earth is and duller,  
Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a  
thing put away:  
No transparent rapture, a molten music of  
colour;  
No translucent love taken and given of  
the day.  
Fettered and marred and begrimed is the  
light's live self on her falling,  
As the light of a man's life lighted the  
fume of a dungeon mars;  
Only she knows of the wind, when her  
wrath gives ear to him calling;  
The delight of the light she knows not,  
nor answers the sun or the stars.  
Love she hath none to return for the lu-  
minous love of their giving:  
None to reflect from the bitter and shal-  
low response of her heart.  
Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself  
seems dead and not living,  
Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with  
trouble that will not depart.  
In the sound of her speech to the darkness  
the moan of her evil remorse is,  
Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the  
dog-toothed sea-bank's fang  
And trampled to death by the rage of the  
feet of her foam-lipped horses  
Whose manes are yellow as plague, and  
as ensigns of pestilence hang,  
That wave in the foul faint air of the  
breath of a death-stricken city;

So menacing heaves she the manes of her  
rollers knotted with sand,  
Discoloured, opaque, suspended in sign as  
of strength without pity,  
That shake with flameless thunder the  
low long length of the strand.  
Here, far off in the farther extreme of the  
shore as it lengthens  
Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a  
village begin,  
On the lapsing land that recedes as the  
growth of the strong sea strengthens  
Shoreward, thrusting further and further  
its outworks in,  
Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of  
her kin forsaken,  
Lay in her golden raiment alone on the  
wild wave's edge,  
Surely by no shore else, but here on the  
bank storm-shaken,  
Perdita, bright as a dew-drop engilt of  
the sun on the sedge.  
Here on a shore unbheld of his eyes in  
a dream he beheld her  
Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a  
far-off king:  
And over the babe-flower gently the head  
of a pastoral elder  
Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the haw-  
thorn-blossom in spring,  
And kind as harvest in autumn: a shelter  
of shade on the lonely  
Shelterless unknown shore scourged of  
implacable waves:  
Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in  
his kingdom, and only  
Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph  
that conquers and craves.  
All these waters and wastes are his empire  
of old, and awaken  
From barren and stagnant slumber at only  
the sound of his breath:  
Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in  
his heart, nor the goal overtaken  
That his wide wings yearn for and labour  
as hearts that yearn after death.  
All the solitude sighs and expects with a  
blind expectation  
Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart,  
grown heartsick of strife:  
Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and  
moans, and the vast ululation  
Takes wing with the clouds on the  
waters, and wails to be quit of its life.  
For the spirit and soul of the waste is the  
wind, and his wings with their waving  
Darken and lighten the darkness and  
light of it thickened or thinned;  
But the heart that impels them is even as  
a conqueror's insatiably craving  
That victory can fill not, as power can-  
not satiate the want of the wind.

All these moorlands and marshes are full  
of his might, and oppose not  
Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest  
or precipice piled:  
But the will of the wind works ever as  
his that desires what he knows not,  
And the wail of his want unfulfilled is  
as one making moan for her child.  
And the cry of his triumph is even as the  
crying of hunger that maddens  
The heart of a strong man aching in vain  
as the wind's heart aches;  
And the sadness itself of the land for its  
infinite solitude saddens  
More for the sound than the silence  
athirst for the sound that slakes.  
And the sunset at last and the twilight are  
dead: and the darkness is breathless  
With fear of the wind's breath rising that  
seems and seems not to sleep:  
But a sense of the sound of it alway, a  
spirit unsleeping and deathless,  
Ghost or God, evermore moves on the  
face of the deep.

## HOPE AND FEAR

[1882.]

BENEATH the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,  
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own  
sphere,  
Hope from the front of youth in godlike  
cheer  
Looks Godward, past the shades where  
blind men grope  
Round the dark door that prayers nor  
dreams can ope,  
And makes for joy the very darkness  
dear  
That gives her wide wings play; nor  
dreams that fear  
At noon may rise and pierce the soul of  
hope.  
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream  
and yearn,  
May truth first purge her eyesight to dis-  
cern  
What once being known leaves time no  
power to appal;  
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not,  
learn  
The kind wise word that falls from years  
that fall—  
"Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at  
all."

FROM THE PRELUDE TO TRISTRAM  
OF LYONESSE

[1882.]

Love, that is first and last of all things  
made,  
The light that has the living world for  
shade,

The spirit that for temporal veil has on  
The souls of all men woven in unison,  
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought  
And lights of sunny and starry deed and  
thought,  
And always through new act and passion  
new  
Shines the divine same body and beauty  
through,  
The body spiritual of fire and light  
That is to worldly noon as noon to light;  
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man  
And spirit within the flesh whence breath  
began;  
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in  
chime;  
Love, that is blood within the veins of  
time;  
That wrought the whole world without  
stroke of hand,  
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of  
land,  
And with the pulse and motion of his  
breath  
Through the great heart of the earth strikes  
life and death,  
The sweet twain chords that make the  
sweet tune live  
Through day and night of things alterna-  
tive,  
Through silence and through sound of  
stress and strife,  
And ebb and flow of dying death and  
life;  
Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's  
ears,  
Whence all men's eyes take fire from  
sparks of tears,  
That binds on all men's feet or chains or  
wings;  
Love, that is root and fruit of terrene  
things;  
Love, that the whole world's waters shall  
not drown,  
The whole world's fiery forces not burn  
down;  
Love, that what time his own hands guard  
his head  
The whole world's wrath and strength shall  
not strike dead;  
Love, that if once his own hands make  
his grave  
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall  
not save;  
Love, that for very life shall not be sold,  
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with  
gold;  
So strong that heaven, could love bid hea-  
ven farewell,  
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering  
hell;

So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,  
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven;  
Love that is fire within thee and light above,  
And lives by grace of nothing but of love;  
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire  
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire;  
Through many and lovely days and much delight  
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

## THE WAY OF THE WIND

[1883.]

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow  
None may measure, as none can say  
How the heart in her shows the swallow  
The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay  
Waves that whiten on wrecks that wallow,  
Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow  
Thought and hope and the red last ray,  
Swim the waters of years that follow  
The wind's way.

## A BABY'S DEATH

[1883.]

## I

A LITTLE soul scarce fledged for earth  
Takes wing with heaven again for goal  
Even while we hailed as fresh from birth  
A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,  
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth  
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,  
And all things held in time's control  
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not  
worth

A little soul.

## II

The little feet that never trod  
Earth, never strayed in field or street,  
What hand leads upward back to God  
The little feet?

A rose in June's most honied heat,  
When life makes keen the kindling sod,  
Was not so soft and warm and sweet.  
Their pilgrimage's period  
A few swift moons have seen complete  
Since mother's hands first clasped and shod  
The little feet.

## III

The little hands that never sought  
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,  
What gift has death, God's servant, brought  
The little hands?

We ask: but love's self silent stands,  
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought  
To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,  
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,  
Where hands of guiding angels caught  
The little hands.

## IV

The little eyes that never knew  
Light other than of dawning skies,  
What new life now lights up anew  
The little eyes?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise  
Such light as never heaven let through  
To lighten earth from Paradise?

No storm, we know, may change the blue  
Soft heaven that haply death desries;  
No tears, like these in ours, bedew  
The little eyes.

## V

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,  
So strait the wide world's range,  
He would not stay to wonder why  
Was life so strange?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange  
Beside that house on high  
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange?

That here at once his soul put by  
All gifts of time and change,  
And left us heavier hearts to sigh  
"Was life so strange?"

## VI

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair

The sweet small frame;  
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,  
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own  
heart he came,  
And might not bear  
The cloud that covers earth's wan face  
with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare  
And soft a flame:  
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed  
him there  
Angel by name.

## VII

The song that smiled upon his birthday here  
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled  
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless  
tear

The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever  
styled  
Sovereign of arts, and angel: fate and fear  
Knew then their master, and were recon-  
ciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer  
sphere  
Michael, an angel and a little child,  
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his  
bier

The song that smiled.

## THE CLIFFSIDE PATH

[A Midsummer Holiday, No. VI]

[1884.]

SEAWARD goes the sun, and homeward by  
the down  
We, before the night upon his grave be  
sealed.  
Low behind us lies the bright steep mur-  
muring town,  
High before us heaves the steep rough  
silent field.  
Breach by ghastlier breach, the cliffs col-  
lapsing yield:  
Half the path is broken, half the banks  
divide;  
Flawed and crumbled, riven and rent, they  
cleave and slide  
Toward the ridged and wrinkled waste of  
girdling sand  
Deep beneath, whose furrows tell how far  
and wide  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of  
the strand.

Star by star on the unsunned waters twir-  
ing down,  
Golden spear-points glance against a silver  
shield.  
Over banks and bents, across the headland's  
crown,  
As by pulse of gradual plumes through  
twilight wheeled,  
Soft as sleep, the waking wind awakes the  
weald.  
Moor and copse and fallow, near or far  
described,  
Feel the mild wings move, and gladden  
where they glide:  
Silence uttering love that all things under-  
stand,  
Bids the quiet fields forget that hard beside  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of  
the strand

Yet may sight, ere all the hoar soft shade  
grow brown,  
Hardly reckon half the rifts and rents un-  
healed

Where the scarred cliffs downward sun-  
dering drive and drown,  
Hewn as if with stroke of swords in tem-  
pest steeled,  
Wielded as the night's will and the wind's  
may wield.  
Crowned and zoned in vain with flowers of  
autumn-tide,  
Life and love seek harborage on the land-  
ward side;  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of  
the strand.

Friend, though man be less than these, for  
all his pride,  
Yet, for all his weakness, shall not hope  
abide?  
Wind and change can wreck but life and  
waste but land:  
Truth and trust are sure, though here till  
all subside  
Wind is lord and change is sovereign of  
the strand.

## A SWIMMER'S DREAM

November 4, 1889

Somno mollior und

[1894.]

## I

DAWN is dim on the dark soft water,  
Soft and passionate, dark and sweet.  
Love's own self was the deep sea's daugh-  
ter,  
Fair and flawless from face to feet,  
Hailed of all when the world was golden,  
Loved of lovers whose names beholden  
Thrill men's eyes as with light of olden  
Days more glad than their flight was  
feet.

So they sang: but for men that love her,  
Souls that hear not her word in vain,  
Earth beside her and heaven above her  
Seem but shadows that wax and wane.  
Softer than sleep's are the sea's caresses,  
Kinder than love's that betrays and blesses,  
Blither than spring's when her flowerful  
tresses

Shake forth sunlight and shine with rain.

All the strength of the waves that perish  
Swells beneath me and laughs and sighs,  
Sighs for love of the lif they cherish,  
Laughs to know that it lives and dies,  
Dies for joy of its life, and lives  
Thrilled with joy that its brief death gives—  
Death whose laugh or whose breath forgives  
Change that bids it subside and rise.

## II

Hard and heavy, remote but nearing,  
Sunless hangs the severe sky's weight,  
Cloud on cloud, though the wind be veering  
Heaped on high to the sundawn's gate.  
Dawn and even and noon are one,  
Veiled with vapour and void of sun:  
Nought in sight or in fancied hearing  
Now less mighty than time or fate.

The grey sky gleams and the grey seas  
glimmer,  
Pale and sweet as a dream's delight,  
As a dream's where darkness and light  
seem dimmer,  
Touched by dawn or subdued by night.  
The dark wind, stern and sublime and sad,  
Swings the rollers to westward, clad  
With lustrous shadow that lures the swim-  
mer,

Lures and lulls him with dreams of light.

Light, and sleep, and delight, and wonder,  
Change, and rest, and a charm of cloud,  
Fill the world of the skies whereunder  
Heaves and quivers and pants aloud  
All the world of the waters, hoary  
Now, but clothed with its own live glory,  
That mates the lightning and mocks the  
thunder

With light more living and word more  
proud.

## III

Far off westward, whither sets the sounding strife,  
Strife more sweet than peace, of shore-  
less waves whose glee  
Scorns the shore and loves the wind that  
leaves them free,  
Strange as sleep and pale as death and fair  
as life,  
Shifts the moonlight-coloured sunshine  
on the sea.

Toward the sunset's goal the sunless waters  
crowd,  
Fast as autumn days toward winter: yet  
it seems  
Here that autumn wanes not, here that  
woods and streams  
Lose not heart and change not likeness,  
chilled and bowed,  
Warped and wrinkled: here the days are  
fair as dreams.

## IV

O russet-robed November,  
What ails thee so to smile?  
Chill August, pale September,  
Endured a woful while,  
And fell as falls an ember  
From forth a flameless pile;  
But golden-girt November  
Bids all she looks on smile.

The lustrous foliage, waning  
As wanes the morning moon,  
Here falling, here refraining,  
Outbraves the pride of June  
With statelier semblance, feigning  
No fear lest death be soon:  
As though the woods thus waning  
Should wax to meet the moon.

As though, when fields lie stricken  
By grey December's breath,  
These lordlier growths that sicken  
And die for fear of death  
Should feel the sense requicken  
That hears what springtide saith  
And thrills for love, spring-stricken  
And pierced with April's breath.

The keen white-winged north-easter  
That stings and spurs thy sea  
Doth yet but feed and feast her  
With glowing sense of glee:  
Calm chained her, storm released her,  
And storm's glad voice was he:  
South-wester or north-easter,  
Thy winds rejoice the sea.

## V

A dream, a dream is it all — the season,  
The sky, the water, the wind, the shore?  
A day-born dream of divine unreason,  
A marvel moulded of sleep — no more?  
For the cloudlike wave that my limbs while  
cleaving  
Feel as in slumber beneath them heaving  
Soothes the sense as to slumber, leaving  
Sense of nought that was known of yore.

A purer passion, a lordlier leisure,  
A peace more happy than lives on land,  
Fulfils with pulse of diviner pleasure  
The dreaming head and the steering hand.  
I lean my cheek to the cold grey pillow,  
The deep soft swell of the full broad billow,  
And close mine eyes for delight past meas-  
ure,  
And wish the wheel of the world would  
stand.

The wild-winged hour that we fain would  
capture  
Falls as from heaven that its light feet  
climb,  
So brief, so soft, and so full the rapture  
Was felt that soothed me with sense of  
home.  
To sleep, to swim, and to dream, for ever—  
Such joy the vision of man saw never;  
For here too soon will a dark day sever  
The sea-bird's wing from the sea-wave's  
foam.

A dream, and more than a dream, and dimmer  
 At once and brighter than dreams that flee,  
 The moment's joy of the seaward swimmer  
 Abides, remembered as truth may be.  
 Not all the joy and not all the glory  
 Must fade as leaves when the woods wax hoary:  
 For there the downs and the sea-banks glimmer,  
 And here to south of them swells the sea.

## ENGLAND: AN ODE

[1894.]

## I

SEA and strand, and a lordlier land than sea-tides rolling and rising sun  
 Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten with day when day that was here is done,  
 Call aloud on their children, proud with trust that future and past are one.

Far and near from the swan's nest here the stormbirds bred of her fair white breast,  
 Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam, have borne the fame of her east and west;  
 North and south has the storm-wind's mouth rung praise of England and England's quest.

Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore to fly with an equal wing:  
 France and Spain with their warrior train bowed down before her as thrall to king;  
 India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway more fruitful of life than spring.

Darkness round them as iron bound fell off from races of elder name,  
 Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids freedom lighten and burn as flame;  
 Night endures not the touch that cures of kingship tyrants, and slaves of shame.  
 All the terror of time, where error and fear were lords of a world of slaves,  
 Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish darkening as waves on waves,  
 Fell or fled from a face that shed such grace as quickens the dust of graves.

Things of night at her glance took flight: the strengths of darkness recoiled and sank:  
 Sank the fires of the murderous pyres whereon wild agony writhed and shrank:  
 Rose the light of the reign of right from gulfs of years that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight, whence glory lightens and music rings, Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite and still the discord of evil things, Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but darkened now by her sail-stretched wings.

## II

Music made of change and conquest, glory born of evil slain, Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade the lights of tempest wane, Where the deathless dawn of England rose in sign that right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and blind with blood and lust, Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed, and slaves allowed it just, Rose as England's light on Asia rose, an smote them down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by justice with her sword, Smote and saved and raised and ruined, till the tyrant-ridden horde Saw the lightning fade from heaven and knew the sun for God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England, where the smile of England shines, Rings the tread and laughs the face of freedom, fair as hope divines Days to be, more brave than ours and lit by lordlier stars for signs.

All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare's voice and Nelson's hand, Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our chosen and chainless land, Bear us witness: come the world against her, England yet shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he lied who said it; he Whom the winds that ward her, waves that clasp, and herb and flower and tree Fed with English dews and sunbeams, hail as more than man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our England be but true, Keep but faith with England fast and firm, and none should bid her rue; None may speak as he: but all may know the sign that Shakespeare knew.

## III

From the springs of the dawn, from the depths of the noon, from the heights of the night that shine, Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that found but in England her throne and her shrine, Speak louder than song may proclaim them that here is the seal of them set for a sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders applause of the land that is one with the sea

Speaks Time in the ear of the people that never at heart was not inly free  
The word of command that assures us of life, if we will but that life shall be;

If the race that is first of the races of men who behold unashamed the sun Stand fast and forget not the sign that is given of the years and the wars that are done,

The token that all who are born of its blood should in heart as in blood be one.

The word of remembrance that lightens as fire from the steeps of the storm-lit past

Bids only the faith of our fathers endure in us, firm as they held it fast; That the glory which was from the first upon England alone may endure to the last.

That the love and the hate may change not, the faith may not fade, nor the wrath nor scorn,

That shines for her sons and that burns for her foemen as fire of the night or the morn:

That the births of her womb may forget not the sign of the glory wherein they were born.

A light that is more than the sunlight, an air that is brighter than morning's breath,

Clothes England about as the strong sea clasps her, and answers the word that it saith;

The word that assures her of life if she change not, and choose not the ways of death.

Change darkens and lightens around her, alternate in hope and in fear to be: Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor fear whether hope be not blind as she: But the sun is in heaven that beholds her immortal, and girdled with life by the sea.

### ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

[1894.]

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,

He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,

Awakened out of life wherein we sleep And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.

But never death for him was dark or dread: "Look forth," he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,

All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep

Vain memory's vision of a vanished head As all that lives of all that once was he Save that which lightens from his word: but we,

Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters roll,

Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea, Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole, And life and death but shadows of the soul.

DECEMBER 13-15, 1889.

# HUMOROUS VERSE

## THE AGE OF WISDOM

Ho! PRETTY page, with the dimpled chin,  
That never has known the barber's shear,  
All your wish is woman to win;  
This is the way that boys begin,—  
Wait till you come to forty year.

Curly gold locks cover foolish brains,  
Billing and cooing is all your cheer;  
Sighing and singing of midnight strains  
Under Bonnybell's window-panes,—  
Wait till you come to forty year!

Forty times over let Michaelmas pass,  
Grizzling hair the brain doth clear;  
Then you know a boy is an ass,  
Then you know the worth of a lass,  
Once you have come to forty year.

Pledge me round; I bid ye declare,  
All good fellows whose beards are grey,  
Did not the fairest of the fair  
Common grow and wearisome, ere  
Ever a month was pass'd away?

The reddest lips that ever have kiss'd,  
The brightest eyes that ever have shone,  
May pray and whisper and we not list,  
Or look away and never be miss'd,  
Ere yet ever a month is gone.

Gillian's dead, God rest her bier,—  
How I loved her twenty years syne!  
Marian's married; but I sit here,  
Alive and merry at forty year,  
Dipping my nose in the Gascon wine.  
1850. —W. M. THACKERAY.

## LITTLE BILLEE

AIR — "Il y avait un petit navire."

THERE were three sailors of Bristol city  
Who took a boat and went to sea.  
But first with beef and captain's biscuits  
And pickled pork they loaded she.

There was gorging Jack and guzzling  
Jimmy,  
And the youngest he was little Billee.  
Now when they got as far as the Equator  
They'd nothing left but one split pea.

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy  
"I am extremely hungaree."  
To gorging Jack says guzzling Jimmy,  
"We've nothing left, us must eat we."

Says gorging Jack to guzzling Jimmy,  
"With one another we should n't agree!  
There's little Bill, he's young and tender,  
We're old and tough, so let's eat he.

"Oh! Billy, we're going to kill and eat  
you,  
So undo the button of your chemie."  
When Bill received this information  
He used his pocket handkerchie.

"First let me say my catechism,  
Which my poor mamy taught to me."  
"Make haste, make haste," says guzzling  
Jimmy,  
While Jack pulled out his snickersnee.

So Billy went up to the main-top gallant  
mast,  
And down he fell on his bended knee.  
He scarce had come to the twelfth com-  
mandment  
When up he jumps. "There's land I see:

"Jerusalem and Madagascar,  
And North and South Amerikee:  
There's the British flag a-riding at anchor,  
With Admiral Napier, K. C. B."

So when they got aboard of the Admiral's  
He hanged fat Jack and flogged Jimmee;  
But as for little Bill he made him  
The Captain of a Seventy-three.  
1849. —W. M. THACKERAY.

## THE BALLAD OF BOUILLABAISSE

A STREET there is in Paris famous,  
For which no rhyme our language yield,  
Rue Neuve des Petits Champs its name is—  
The New Street of the Little Fields.  
And here's an inn, not rich and splendid,  
But still in comfortable case;  
The which in youth I oft attended,  
To eat a bowl of Bouillabaisse.

This Bouillabaisse a noble dish is—  
A sort of soup or broth, or brew,  
Or hotchpotch of all sorts of fishes,  
That Greenwich never could outdo:  
Green herbs, red peppers, mussels, saffron,  
Soles, onions, garlic, roach, and dace:  
All these you eat at Terre's tavern,  
In that one dish of Bouillabaisse.

Indeed, a rich and savory stew 'tis;  
And true philosophers, methinks,  
Who love all sorts of natural beauties,  
Should love good victuals and good  
drinks.  
And Cordelier or Benedictine  
Might gladly, sure, his lot embrace,  
Nor find a fast-day too afflicting,  
Which served him up a Bouillabaisse.

I wonder if the house still there is?  
Yes, here the lamp is, as before;  
The smiling red-cheeked écaillerie is  
Still opening oysters at the door.  
Is Terré still alive' and able?  
I recollect his droll grimace;  
He'd come and smile before your table,  
And hope you liked your Bouillabaisse.

We enter — nothing's changed or older.  
"How's Monsieur Terré, waiter, pray?"  
The waiter stares and shrugs his shoulder —  
"Monsieur is dead this many a day."  
"It is the lot of saint and sinner,  
So honest Terré's run his race!"  
"What will Monsieur require for dinner?"  
"Say, do you still cook Bouillabaisse?"

"Oh, oui, Monsieur," 's the waiter's answer;  
"Quel vin Monsieur désire-t-il?"  
"Tell me a good one." — "That I can, Sir:  
The Chambertin with yellow seal."  
"So Terré's gone," I say, and sink in  
My old accustom'd corner-place;  
"He's done with feasting and with drink-  
ing,  
With Burgundy and Bouillabaisse."

My old accustom'd corner here is, —  
The table still is in the nook;  
Ah! vanish'd many a busy year is  
This well-known chair since last I took.  
When first I saw ye, *cari luoghi*,  
I'd scarce a beard upon my face,  
And now a grizzled, grim old fogey,  
I sit and wait for Bouillabaisse.

Where are you, old companions trusty  
Of early days here met to dine?  
Come, waiter! quick, a flagon crusty —  
I'll pledge them in the good old wine.  
The kind old voices and old faces  
My memory can quick retrace;  
Around the board they take their places,  
And share the wine and Bouillabaisse.

There's Jack has made a wondrous mar-  
riage:  
There's laughing Tom is laughing yet;  
There's brave Augustus drives his carriage;  
There's poor old Fred in the *Gazette*;  
On James's head the grass is growing:  
Good Lord! the world has wagged apace  
Since here we set the Claret flowing,  
And drank, and ate the Bouillabaisse.

Ah me! how quick the days are flitting!  
I mind me of a time that's gone,  
When here I'd sit, as now I'm sitting,  
In this same place — but not alone.  
A fair young form was nestled near me,  
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,  
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me.  
— There's no one now to share my cup.

I drink it as the Fates ordain it.  
Come, fill it, and have done with rhymes:  
Fill up the lonely glass, and drain it  
In memory of dear old times.  
Welcome the wine, whate'er the seal is;  
And sit you down and say your grace  
With thankful heart, whate'er the meal is.  
— Here comes the smoking Bouillabaisse!

1849. — W. M. THACKERAY.

#### SORROWS OF WERTHER

WERTHER had a love for Charlotte  
Such as words could never utter;  
Would you know how first he met her?  
She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,  
And a moral man was Werther,  
And, for all the wealth of Indies,  
Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sighed and pined and ogled,  
And his passion boiled and bubbled,  
Till he blew his silly brains out,  
And no more was by it troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body  
Borne before her on a shutter,  
Like a well-conducted person,  
Went on cutting bread and butter.

1855. — W. M. THACKERAY.

#### THE JUMBLIES

THEY went to sea in a sieve, they did;  
In a sieve they went to sea;  
In spite of all their friends could say,  
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,  
In a sieve they went to sea.  
And when the sieve turn'd round and round,  
And every one cried, "You'll be drown'd!"  
They call'd aloud, "Our sieve ain't big:  
But we don't care a button; we don't care  
a fig:

In a sieve we 'll go to sea!"  
Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live;  
Their heads are green, and their hands  
are blue;

And they went to sea in a sieve.

They sail'd away in a sieve, they did,  
In a sieve they sail'd so fast,  
With only a beautiful pea-green veil  
Tied with a ribbon, by way of a sail,  
To a small tobacco-pipe mast.

And every one said who saw them go,  
"Oh! won't they be soon upset, you know:  
For the sky is dark, and the voyage is long;  
And, happen what may, it's extremely  
wrong."

In a sieve to sail so fast."

The water it soon came in, it did;  
The water it soon came in:  
So, to keep them dry, they wrapp'd their  
feet  
In a pinky paper all folded neat:  
And they fasten'd it down with a pin.  
And they pass'd the night in a crockery-  
jar;  
And each of them said, "How wise we are!  
Though the sky be dark, and the voyage  
be long,  
Yet we never can think we were rash or  
wrong,  
While round in our sieve we spin."

And all night long they sail'd away;  
And, when the sun went down,  
They whistled and warbled a moony song  
To the echoing sound of a coppery gong,  
In the shade of the mountains brown,  
"O Timballoo! how happy we are!  
When we live in a sieve and a crockery-jar!  
And all night long, in the moonlight pale,  
We sail away with a pea-green sail  
In the shade of the mountains brown."  
They sail'd to the Western Sea, they did,—  
To a land all cover'd with trees:  
And they bought an owl, and a useful cart,  
And a pound of rice, and a cranberry-tart,  
And a hive of silvery bees;  
And they bought a pig, and some green  
jackdaws,  
And a lovely monkey with lollipop paws,  
And forty bottles of ring-bo-ree,  
And no end of Stilton cheese:

And in twenty years they all came back,—  
In twenty years or more;  
And every one said, "How tall they've  
grown!  
For they've been to the Lakes, and the Ter-  
rible Zone,  
And the hills of the Chankly Bore."  
And they drank their health, and gave  
them a feast  
Of dumplings made of beautiful yeast;  
And every one said, "If we only live,  
We, too, will go to sea in a sieve,  
To the hills of the Chankly Bore."

Far and few, far and few,  
Are the lands where the Jumblies live:  
Their heads are green, and their hands  
are blue;  
And they went to sea in a sieve.

1871.

— EDWARD LEAR.

### THE MOCK TURTLE'S SONG

[From Alice in Wonderland.]

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a  
whiting to a snail,  
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and  
he's treading on my tail.  
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles  
all advance!  
They are waiting on the shingle—will  
you come and join the dance?  
Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,  
will you join the dance?  
Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,  
wo'n't you join the dance?"

"You can really have no notion how de-  
lightful it will be  
When they take us up and throw us, with  
the lobsters, out to sea!"  
But the snail replied "Too far, too far!",  
and gave a look askance—  
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he  
would not join the dance.  
Would not, could not, would not, could  
not, would not join the dance.  
Would not, could not, would not, could  
not, could not join the dance.

"What matters it how far we go?" his  
scaly friend replied.  
"There is another shore, you know, upon  
the other side.  
The further off from England the nearer is  
to France—  
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but  
come and join the dance.  
Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,  
will you join the dance?  
Will you, wo'n't you, will you, wo'n't you,  
wo'n't you join the dance?"

1865.

— LEWIS CARROLL.

### THE WALRUS AND THE CAR- PENTER

[From Through the Looking Glass.]

THE sun was shining on the sea,  
Shining with all his might:  
He did his very best to make  
The billows smooth and bright—  
And this was odd, because it was  
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,  
Because she thought the sun  
Had got no business to be there  
After the day was done—  
"It's very rude of him," she said,  
"To come and spoil the fun!"

The sea was wet as wet could be,  
The sands were dry as dry.  
You could not see a cloud, because  
No cloud was in the sky:  
No birds were flying overhead—  
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Were walking close at hand:  
They wept like anything to see  
Such quantities of sand:  
"If this were only cleared away,"  
They said, "it would be grand!"

"If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept it for half a year,  
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,  
"That they could get it clear?"  
"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,  
And shed a bitter tear.

"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"  
The Walrus did beseech.  
"A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,  
Along the briny beach:  
We cannot do with more than four,  
To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,  
But never a word he said:  
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,  
And shook his heavy head—  
Meaning to say he did not choose  
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,  
All eager for the treat:  
Their coats were brushed, their faces  
washed,  
Their shoes were clean and neat—  
And this was odd, because, you know,  
They had n't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,  
And yet another four;  
And thick and fast they came at last,  
And more, and more, and more—  
All hopping through the frothy waves,  
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Walked on a mile or so,  
And then they rested on a rock  
Conveniently low:  
And all the little Oysters stood  
And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,  
"To talk of many things:  
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—  
Of cabbages—and kings—  
And why the sea is boiling hot—  
And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,  
"Before we have our chat;  
For some of us are out of breath,  
And all of us are fat!"  
"No hurry!" said the Carpenter.  
They thanked him much for that.

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,  
"Is what we chiefly need:  
Pepper and vinegar besides  
Are very good indeed—  
Now, if you're ready, Oysters dear,  
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,  
Turning a little blue.  
"After such kindness, that would be  
A dismal thing to do!"  
"The night is fine," the Walrus said,  
"Do you admire the view?"

"It was so kind of you to come!  
And you are very nice!"  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
"Cut us another slice.  
I wish you were not quite so deaf—  
I've had to ask you twice!"

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,  
"To play them such a trick.  
After we've brought them out so far,  
And made them trot so quick!"  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
"The butter's spread too thick!"

"I weep for you," the Walrus said:  
"I deeply sympathize."  
With sobs and tears he sorted out  
Those of the largest size,  
Holding his pocket-handkerchief  
Before his streaming eyes.

"O Oysters," said the Carpenter,  
"You've had a pleasant run!  
Shall we be trotting home again?"  
But answer came there none—  
And this was scarcely odd, because  
They'd eaten every one.  
1872.

— LEWIS CARROLL.

### JABBERWOCKY

[From Through the Looking Glass.]

'TWAS brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his, vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought—  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and  
through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

1872. —LEWIS CARROLL.

#### THE BAKER'S TALE

[From the Hunting of the Snark.]

They rous'd him with muffins — they rous'd  
him with ice —  
They rous'd him with mustard and  
cress —  
They rous'd him with jam and judicious  
advice —

They set him conundrums to guess.  
When at length he sat up and was able to  
speak,  
His sad story he offer'd to tell;  
And the Bellman cried "Silence! Not even  
a shriek!"

And excitedly tingled his bell.  
There was silence supreme! Not a shriek,  
not a scream,  
Scarcely even a howl or a groan,  
As the man they call'd "Ho!" told his  
story of woe  
In an antediluvian tone.

"My father and mother were honest,  
though poor —"  
"Skip all that!" cried the Bellman in  
haste.  
"If it once becomes dark, there's no chance  
of a Snark —

We have hardly a minute to waste!"  
"I skip forty years," said the Baker, in  
tears,  
"And proceed without further remark  
To the day when you took me aboard of  
your ship  
To help you in hunting the Snark.

"A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was  
nam'd)

Remark'd, when I bade him farewell —"  
"Oh, skip your dear uncle!" the Bellman  
exclaim'd,  
As he angrily tingled his bell.

"He remark'd to me then," said the mildest  
of men,

"If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:  
Fetch it home by all means — you may  
serve it with greens,  
And it's handy for striking a light.

"You may seek it with thimbles — and  
seek it with care;  
You may hunt it with forks and hope;  
You may threaten its life with a railway-share;  
You may charm it with smiles and  
soap —"

("That's exactly the method," the Bellman  
bold)

In a hasty parenthesis cried,  
"That's exactly the way I have always  
been told  
That the capture of Snarks should be  
tried!")

"But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the  
day,

If your Snark be a Boojum! For then  
You will softly and suddenly vanish away,  
And never be met with again!"

"It is this, it is this that oppresses my  
soul,

When I think of my uncle's last words:  
And my heart is like nothing so much  
as a bowl  
Brimming over with quivering curds!

"It is this, it is this —" "We have had that  
before!"

The Bellman indignantly said.  
And the Baker replied, "Let me say it once  
more.

It is this, it is this that I dread!

"I engage with the Snark — every night  
after dark —

In a dreamy, delirious fight;  
I serve it with greens in those shadowy  
scenes,  
And I use it for striking a light:

"But if ever I meet with a Boojum, that  
day,

In a moment (of this I am sure),  
I shall softly and suddenly vanish away —  
And the notion I cannot endure!"

1876. —LEWIS CARROLL.

## CAPTAIN REECE

OF ALL the ships upon the blue,  
No ship contained a better crew  
Than that of worthy CAPTAIN REECE,  
Commanding of *The Mantelpiece*.

He was adored by all his men,  
For worthy CAPTAIN REECE, R. N.,  
Did all that lay within him to  
Promote the comfort of his crew.

If ever they were dull or sad,  
Their captain danced to them like mad,  
Or told, to make the time pass by,  
Droll legends of his infancy.

A feather bed had every man,  
Warm slippers and hot-water can,  
Brown windsor from the captain's store,  
A valet, too, to every four.

Did they with thirst in summer burn?  
Lo, seltzogenes at every turn,  
And on all very sultry days  
Cream ices handed round on trays.

Then currant wine and ginger pops  
Stood handily on all the "tops:"  
And, also, with amusement rife,  
A "Zoetrope, or Wheel of Life."

New volumes came across the sea  
From MISTER MUDIE'S libraree;  
The Times and Saturday Review  
Beguiled the leisure of the crew.

Kind-hearted CAPTAIN REECE, R. N.,  
Was quite devoted to his men;  
In point of fact, good CAPTAIN REECE  
Beatified *The Mantelpiece*.

One summer eve, at half-past ten,  
He said (addressing all his men):  
"Come, tell me, please, what I can do  
To please and gratify my crew.

"By any reasonable plan  
I'll make you happy if I can;  
My own convenience count as *nil*;  
It is my duty, and I will."

Then up and answered WILLIAM LEE,  
(The kindly captain's coxswain he,  
A nervous, shy, low-spoken man)  
He cleared his throat and thus began:

"You have a daughter, CAPTAIN REECE,  
Ten female cousins and a niece,  
A ma, if what I'm told is true,  
Six sisters, and an aunt or two.

"Now, somehow, sir, it seems to me,  
More friendly-like we all should be,  
If you united of 'em to  
Unmarried members of the crew.

"If you'd ameliorate our life,  
Let each select from them a wife;  
And as for nervous me, old pal,  
Give me your own enchanting gal!"

Good CAPTAIN REECE, that worthy man,  
Debated on his coxswain's plan:  
"I quite agree," he said, "O BILL,  
It is my duty, and I will.

"My daughter, that enchanting gurl,  
Has just been promised to an earl,  
And all my other familee  
To peers of various degree.

"But what are dukes and viscounts to  
The happiness of all my crew?  
The word I gave you I'll fulfil;  
It is my duty, and I will.

"As you desire it shall befall,  
I'll settle thousands on you all,  
And I shall be, despite my hoard,  
The only bachelor on board."

The boatswain of *The Mantelpiece*,  
He blushed and spoke to CAPTAIN REECE:  
"I beg your honor's leave," he said,  
"If you would wish to go and wed,

"I have a widowed mother who  
Would be the very thing for you—  
She long has loved you from afar,  
She washes for you, CAPTAIN R."

The captain saw the dame that day—  
Addressed her in his playful way—  
"And did it want a wedding ring?  
It was a tempting ickle sing!"

"Well, well, the chaplain I will seek,  
We'll all be married this day week—  
At yonder church upon the hill;  
It is my duty, and I will!"

The sisters, cousins, aunts, and niece,  
And widowed ma of CAPTAIN REECE,  
Attended there as they were bid;  
It was their duty, and they did.

1869.

—W. S. GILBERT.

## THE BISHOP OF RUM-TI-FOO

FROM east and south the holy clan  
Of bishops gathered, to a man;  
To Synod, called Pan-Anglican;  
In flocking crowds they came.  
Among them was a Bishop, who  
Had lately been appointed to  
The balmy isle of Rum-ti-Foo,  
And Peter was his name.

His people—twenty-three in sum—  
They played the eloquent tum-tum  
And lived on scalps served up in rum—  
The only sauce they knew.

When first good BISHOP PETER came  
(For PETER was that Bishop's name),  
To humor them, he did the same  
As they of Rum-ti-Foo.

His flock, I've often heard him tell,  
(His name was PETER) loved him well,  
And summoned by the sound of bell,  
In crowds together came.  
"Oh, massa, why you go away?  
Oh, MASSA PETER, please to stay."  
(They called him PETER, people say,  
Because it was his name.)

He told them all good boys to be,  
And sailed away across the sea,  
At London Bridge that Bishop he  
Arrived one Tuesday night—  
And as that night he homeward strode  
To his Pan-Anglican abode  
He passed along the Borough Road  
And saw a gruesome sight.

He saw a crowd assembled round  
A person dancing on the ground,  
Who straight began to leap and bound  
With all his might and main.  
To see that dancing man he stopped,  
Who twirled and wriggled, skipped and  
hopped,  
Then down incontinently dropped,  
And then sprang up again.

The Bishop chuckled at the sight,  
"This style of dancing would delight  
A simple Rum-ti-Foozle-ite.  
I'll learn it, if I can,  
To please the tribe when I get back."  
He begged the man to teach his knack.  
"Right Reverend Sir, in half a crack,"  
Replied that dancing man.

The dancing man he worked away  
And taught the Bishop every day—  
The dancer skipped like any fay—  
Good PETER did the same.  
The Bishop buckled to his task  
With *battements*, cuts, and *pas de basque*,  
(I'll tell you, if you care to ask,  
That PETER was his name).

"Come, walk like this," the dancer said,  
"Stick out your toes—stick in your head,  
Stalk on with quick, galvanic tread—  
Your fingers thus extend;  
The attitude's considered quaint."  
The weary Bishop, feeling faint,  
Replied, "I do not say it ain't,  
But 'Time!' my Christian friend!"

"We now proceed to something new—  
Dance as the PAYNES and LAURIS do,  
Like this—one, two—one, two—one, two."  
The Bishop, never proud,

But in an overwhelming heat  
(His name was PETER, I repeat)  
Performed the PAYNE and LAURI feat,  
And puffed his thanks aloud.

Another game the dancer planned—  
'Just take your ankle in your hand,  
And try, my lord, if you can stand—  
Your body stiff and stark.  
If when revisiting your see,  
You learnt to hop on shore—like me—  
The novelty must striking be,  
And must excite remark."

"No," said the worthy Bishop, "No;  
That is a length to which, I trow,  
Colonial Bishops cannot go.  
You may express surprise  
At finding Bishops deal in pride—  
but, if that trick I ever tried,  
I should appear undignified  
In Rum-ti-Foozle's eyes.

"The islanders of Rum-ti-Foo  
Are well-conducted persons, who  
Approve a joke as much as you,  
And laugh at it as such;  
But if they saw their Bishop land,  
His leg supported in his hand,  
The joke they wouldn't understand—  
'Twould pain them very much!"

1869. — W. S. GILBERT.

#### TO THE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE BY A MISERABLE WRETCH

ROLL on, thou ball, roll on!  
Through pathless realms of Space  
Roll on!  
What, though I'm in a sorry case?  
What, though I cannot meet my bills?  
What, though I suffer toothache's ills?  
What, though I swallow countless pills?  
Never *you* mind!  
Roll on!

ROLL on, thou ball, roll on!  
Through seas of inky air  
Roll on!  
It's true I've got no shirts to wear;  
It's true my butcher's bill is due  
It's true my prospects all look blue—  
But don't let that unsettle you!  
Never *you* mind!  
Roll on!

1869. — W. S. GILBERT. [It rolls on.]

#### GENTLE ALICE BROWN

It was a robber's daughter, and her name  
was Alice Brown;  
Her father was the terror of a small Italian  
town;

Her mother was a foolish, weak, but amiable old thing;  
But it isn't of her parents that I'm going for to sing.

As Alice was a-sitting at her window-sill one day,  
A beautiful young gentleman he chanced to pass that way;  
She cast her eyes upon him, and he looked so good and true,  
That she thought, "I could be happy with a gentleman like you!"

And every morning passed her house that cream of gentlemen,  
She knew she might expect him at a quarter unto ten,  
A sorter in the Custom-house, it was his daily road  
(The Custom-house was fifteen minutes' walk from her abode).

But Alice was a pious girl, who knew it wasn't wise  
To look at strange young sorters with expressive purple eyes;  
So she sought the village priest to whom her family confessed,  
The priest by whom their little sins were carefully assessed.

"Oh, holy father," Alice said, "'t would grieve you, would it not?  
To discover that I was a most disreputable lot!  
Of all unhappy sinners I'm the most unhappy one!  
The padre said, "Whatever have you been and gone and done?"

"I have helped mamma to steal a little kiddy from its dad,  
I've assisted dear papa in cutting up a little lad.  
I've planned a little burglary and forged a little check,  
And slain a little baby for the coral on its neck!"

The worthy pastor heaved a sigh, and dropped a silent tear—  
And said, "You mustn't judge yourself too heavily, my dear—  
It's wrong to murder babies, little corals for to fleece;  
But sins like these one expiates at half-a-crown apiece.

"Girls will be girls—you're very young, and flighty in your mind;  
Old heads upon young shoulders we must not expect to find:  
We mustn't be too hard upon these little girlish tricks—  
Let's see—five crimes at half-a-crown—exactly twelve-and-six."

"Oh, father," little Alice cried, "your kindness makes me weep,  
You do these little things for me so singularly cheap—  
Your thoughtful liberality I never can forget;  
But, O, there is another crime I haven't mentioned yet!"

"A pleasant-looking gentleman, with pretty purple eyes,  
I've noticed at my window, as I've sat a-catching flies;  
He passes by it every day as certain as can be—  
I blush to say I've winked at him and he has winked at me!"

"For shame," said Father Paul, "my erring daughter! On my word This is the most distressing news that I have ever heard.  
Why, naughty girl, your excellent papa has pledged your hand To a promising young robber, the lieutenant of his band!"

"This dreadful piece of news will pain your worthy parents so!  
They are the most remunerative customers I know;  
For many many years they've kept starvation from my doors,  
I never knew so criminal a family as yours!"

"The common country folk in this insipid neighborhood Have nothing to confess, they're so ridiculously good;  
And if you marry any one respectable at all,  
Why, you'll reform, and what will then become of Father Paul?"

The worthy priest, he up and drew his cowl upon his crown,  
And started off in haste to tell the news to Robber Brown;  
To tell him how his daughter, who now was for marriage fit,  
Had winked upon a sorter, who reciprocated it.

Good Robber Brown he muffled up his anger pretty well,  
He said "I have a notion, and that notion I will tell;  
I will nab this gay young sorter, terrify him into fits,  
And get my gentle wife to chop him into little bits."

"I've studied human nature, and I know a thing or two,  
Though a girl may fondly love a living gent, as many do—

A feeling of disgust upon her senses there  
will fall  
When she looks upon his body chopped  
particularly small."

He traced that gallant sorter to a still  
suburban square;  
He watched his opportunity and seized him  
unaware;  
He took a life-preserver and he hit him on  
the head,  
And Mrs. Brown dissected him before she  
went to bed.

And pretty little Alice grew more settled  
in her mind,  
She never more was guilty of a weakness  
of the kind,  
Until at length good Robber Brown be-  
stowed her pretty hand  
On the promising young robber, the lieu-  
tenant of his band.

1869. — W. S. GILBERT.

### THE POLICEMAN'S LOT

[From *The Pirates of Penzance*.]

WHEN a felon's not engaged in his em-  
ployment,  
Or maturing his felonious little plans,  
His capacity for innocent enjoyment  
Is just as great as any honest man's.  
Our feelings we with difficulty smother  
When constabulary duty's to be done:  
Ah, take one consideration with another,  
A policeman's lot is not a happy one.

When the enterprising burglar's not a-  
burgling,  
When the cut-throat isn't occupied in  
crime,

He loves to hear the little brook a-gurgling,  
And listen to the merry village chime.  
When the coster's finished jumping on his  
mother,  
He loves to lie a-basking in the sun:  
Ah, take one consideration with another,  
The policeman's lot is not a happy one!

1880. — W. S. GILBERT.

### OCTOPUS

BY ALGERNON CHARLES SIN-BURN

STRANGE beauty, eight-limbed and eight-  
handed,  
Whence camest to dazzle our eyes?  
With thy bosom bespangled and banded  
With the hues of the seas and the skies;  
Is thy home European or Asian,  
O mystical monster marine?  
Part molluscous and partly crustacean,  
Betwixt and between.

Wast thou born to the sound of sea trum-  
pets,  
Hast thou eaten and drunk to excess  
Of the sponges — thy muffins and crum-  
pets,  
Of the seaweed — thy mustard and  
cress?  
Wast thou nurtured in caverns of coral,  
Remote from reproof or restraint?  
Art thou innocent, art thou immoral,  
Sinburnian or Saint?

Lithe limbs, curling free, as a creeper  
That creeps in a desolate place,  
To enroll and envelop the sleeper  
In a silent and stealthy embrace,  
Cruel beak craning forward to bite us,  
Our juices to drain and to drink,  
Or towhelm us in waves of Cocytus,  
Indelible ink!

O breast, that 'twere rapture to writhe on!  
O arms 'twere delicious to feel  
Clinging close with the crush of the Py-  
thon,  
When she maketh her murderous meal!  
In thy eight-fold embraces enfolden,  
Let our empty existence escape;  
Give us death that is glorious and golden,  
Crushed all out of shape!

Ah! thy red lips, lascivious and luscious,  
With death in their amorous kiss,  
Cling round us, and clasp us, and crush us,  
With bitings of agonised bliss;  
We are sick with the poison of pleasure,  
Dispense us the potion of pain;  
Open thy mouth to its uttermost measure  
And bite us again!

1872.

— A. C. HILTON.

### WANDERERS

As o'er the hill we roamed at will,  
My dog and I together,  
We mark'd a chaise, by two bright bay,  
Slow-moved along the heather:

Two bays arch neck'd, with tails erect  
And gold upon their blinkers;  
And by their side an ass I spied;  
It was a travelling tinker's.

The chaise went by, nor aught cared I;  
Such things are not in my way:  
I turn'd me to the tinker, who  
Was loafing' down a by-way:

I ask'd him where he lived — a stare  
Was all I got in answer,  
As on he trudged: I rightly judged  
The stare said, "Where I can, sir."

I ask'd him if he'd take a whiff  
Of bacco; he acceded;  
He grew communicative too,  
(A pipe was all he needed,)  
Till of the tinker's life, I think,  
I knew as much as he did.

"I loiter down by thorp and town;  
For any job I'm willing;  
Take here and there a dusty brown,  
And here and there a shilling.

"I deal in every ware in turn,  
I've rings for buddin' Sally  
That sparkle like those eyes of her'n,  
I've liquor for the valet.

"I steal from th' parson's strawberry-plots,  
I hide by th' squire's covers;  
I teach the sweet young housemaids what's  
The art of trapping lovers.

"The things I've done 'neath moon and  
stars  
Have got me into messes;  
I've seen the sky through prison bars,  
I've torn up prison dresses:

"I've sat, I've sigh'd, I've gloom'd, I've  
glanced  
With envy at the swallows  
That through the window slid, and danced  
(Quite happy) round the gallows;

"But out again I come, and show  
My face nor care a stiver,  
For trades are brisk and trades are slow,  
But mine goes on for ever."

Thus on he prattled like a babbling brook.  
Then I, "The sun had slipt behind the hill,  
And my aunt Vivian dines at half-past  
six."

So in all love we parted; I to the Hall,  
They to the village. It was noised next  
noon

That chickens had been miss'd at Syllabub  
Farm.

1872. — C. S. CALVERLEY.

#### THE HIGHER PANTHEISM IN A NUTSHELL

ONE, who is not, we see: but one, whom  
we see not, is:

Surely this is not that: but that is assuredly  
this.

What, and wherefore, and whence? for  
under is over and under:

If thunder could be without lightning,  
lightning could be without thunder.

Doubt is faith in the main: but faith, on  
the whole, is doubt:

We cannot believe by proof: but could we  
believe without?

Why, whither, and how? for barley and  
rye are not clover:  
Neither are straight lines curves: yet over  
is under and over.

Two and two may be four, but four and  
four are not eight:  
Fate and God may be twain: but God is  
the same thing as fate.

Ask a man what he thinks, and get from  
a man what he feels:  
God, once caught in the fact, shows you  
a fair pair of heels.

Body and spirit are twins: God only knows  
which is which:  
The soul squats down in the flesh, like a  
tinker drunk in a ditch.

More is the whole than a part: but half is  
more than the whole:  
Clearly, the soul is the body: but is not  
the body the soul?

One and two are not one: but one and  
nothing is two:  
Truth can hardly be false, if falsehood can-  
not be true.

Once the mastodon was: pterodactyls were  
as common as cocks:  
Then the mammoth was God: now is He  
a prize ox.

Parallels all things are: yet many of these  
are askew:  
You are certainly I: but certainly I am not  
you.

Springs the rock from the plain, shoots  
the stream from the rock:  
Cocks exist for the hen, but hens exist for  
for the cock.

God, whom we see not, is: and God, who  
is not, we see:  
Fiddle, we know, is diddle: and diddle, we  
take it is dee.

1880.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

#### NEPHELIDIA

*Poetry first.*

FROM the depth of the dreamy decline of  
the dawn through a notable nimbus of  
nebulous moonshine,

Pallid and pink as the palm of the flag-  
flower that flickers with fear of the  
flies as they float,

Are the looks of our lovers that lustrosely  
lean from a marvel of mystic miracu-  
lous moonshine,  
These that we feel in the blood of our  
blushes that thicken and threaten with  
throbs through the throat?

Thicken and thrill as a theatre thronged at appeal of an actor's appalled agitation,  
Fainter with fear of the fires of the future, that pale with the promise of pride in the past;

Flushed with the famishing fulness of fever that reddens with radiance of rathe recreation,

Gaunt as the ghastliest of glimpses that gleam through the gloom of the gloaming when ghosts go aghast?

Nay, for the tick of the tick of the time is a tremulous touch on the temples of terror,

Strained as the sinews yet strenuous with strife of the dead who is dumb as the dust-heaps of death:

Surely no soul is it, sweet as the spasm of erotic emotional exquisite error,

Bathed in the balms of beatified bliss, beatify itself by beatitudes' breath.

Surely no spirit or sense of a soul that was soft to the spirit and soul of our senses

Sweetens the stress of suspiring suspicion that sobs in the semblance and sound of a sigh;

Only this oracle opens Olympian, in mystical moods and triangular tenses—

"Life is the lust of a lamp for the light that is dark till the dawn of the day when we die."

Mild is the mirk and monotonous music of memory, melodiously mute as it may be,

While the hope in the heart of a hero is bruised by the breach of men's rapiers, resigned to the rod;

Made meek as a mother whose bosom-beats bound with the bliss-bringing bulk of a balm-breathing baby,

As they grope through the grave-yard of creeds, under skies growing green at a groan for the grimness of God.

Blank is the book of his bounty beholden of old, and its binding is blacker than bluer:

Out of blue into black is the scheme of the skies, and their dews are the wine of the bloodshed of things;

Till the darkling desire of delight shall be free as a fawn that is freed from the fangs that pursue her,

Till the heart-beats of hell shall be hushed by a hymn from the hunt that has harried the kennel of kings.

1880.

A. C. SWINBURNE.

### TO R. K.

WILL there never come a season  
Which shall rid us from the curse  
Of a prose which knows no reason  
And an unmelodious verse:  
When the world shall cease to wonder  
At the genius of an ass,  
And a boy's eccentric blunder  
Shall not bring success to pass:

When mankind shall be delivered  
From the clash of magazines,  
And the inkstands shall be shivered  
Into countless smithereens:  
When there stands a muzzled stripling,  
Mute, beside a muzzled bore:  
When the Rudyards cease from kipling  
And the Haggards ride no more.

1891. J. K. STEPHEN.

### A SONNET

Two voices are there: one is of the deep;  
It learns the storm-cloud's thunderous melody,  
Now roars, now murmurs with the changing sea,  
Now bird-like pipes, now closes soft in sleep;  
And one is of an old half-witted sheep  
Which bleats articulate monotony,  
And indicates that two and one are three,  
That grass is green, lakes damp, and mountains steep:  
And, Wordsworth, both are thine; at certain times,  
Forth from the heart of thy melodious rhymes  
The form and pressure of high thoughts will burst:

At other times—good Lord! I'd rather be  
Quite unacquainted with the A. B. C.  
Than write such hopeless rubbish as thy worst.

1891. —J. K. STEPHEN.

# GEORGE MEREDITH

[1828-1909]

## THE WOODS OF WESTERMAIN

[1862.]

### I

ENTER these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.  
Nothing harms beneath the leaves  
More than waves a swimmer cleaves.  
Toss your heart up with the lark,  
Foot at peace with mouse and worm,  
Fair you fare.  
Only at a dread of dark  
Quaver, and they quit their form:  
Thousand eyeballs under hoods  
Have you by the hair.  
Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.

### II

Here the snake across your path  
Stretches in his golden bath:  
Mossy-footed squirrels leap  
Soft as winnowing plumes of Sleep:  
Yaffles on a chuckle skim  
Low to laugh from branches dim:  
Up the pine, where sits the star,  
Rattles deep the moth-winged jar.  
Each has business of his own;  
But should you distrust a tone,  
Then beware.  
Shudder all the haunted roads,  
All the eyeballs under hoods  
Shroud you in their glare.  
Enter these enchanted woods,  
You who dare.

### III

Open hither, open hence,  
Scarce a bramble weaves a fence,  
Where the strawberry runs red,  
With white star-flower overhead;  
Cumbered by dry twig and cone,  
Shredded husks of seedlings flown,  
Mine of mole and spotted flint:  
Of dire wizardry no hint,  
Save mayhap the print that shows  
Hasty outward-tripping toes,  
Heels to terror, on the mould.  
These, the woods of Westermain,  
Are as others to behold,  
Rich of wreathing sun and rain;  
Foliage lustreful around  
Shadowed leagues of slumbering sound.  
Wavy tree-tops, yellow whins,  
Shelter eager minikins,

Myriads, free to peck and pipe:  
Would you better? would you worse?  
You with them may gather ripe  
Pleasures flowing not from purse.  
Quick and far as Colour flies  
Taking the delighted eyes,  
You of any well that springs  
May unfold the heaven of things;  
Have it homely and within,  
And thereof its likeness win,  
Will you so in soul's desire:  
This do sages grant t' the lyre.  
This is being bird and more,  
More than glad musician this;  
Granaries you will have a store  
Past the world of woe and bliss;  
Sharing still its bliss and woe;  
Harnessed to its hungers, no.  
On the throne Success usurps,  
You shall seat the joy you feel  
Where a race of water chirps,  
Twisting hues of flourished steel:  
Or where light is caught in hoop  
Up a clearing's leafy rise,  
Where the crossing deerherds troop  
Classic splendours, knightly dyes.  
Or, where old-eyed oxen chew  
Speculation with the cud,  
Read their pool of vision through,  
Back to hours when mind was mud;  
Nigh the knot, which did untwine  
Timelessly to drowsy suns;  
Seeing Earth a slimy spine,  
Heaven a space for winging tons.  
Farther, deeper, may you read,  
Have you sight for things afield,  
Where peeps she, the Nurse of seed,  
Cloaked, but in the peep revealed;  
Showing a kind face and sweet:  
Look you with the soul you see 't.  
Glory narrowing to grace,  
Grace to glory magnified,  
Following that will you embrace  
Close in arms or airy wide.  
Banished is the white Foam-born  
Not from here, nor under ban  
Phœbus lyrist, Phœbe's horn,  
Pipings of the reedy Pan.  
Loved of Earth of old they were,  
Loving did interpret her;  
And the sterner worship bars  
None whom Song has made her stars.  
You have seen the huntress moon  
Radiantly facing dawn,  
Dusky meads between them strewn

Glimmering like downy awn:  
 Argent Westward glows the hunt,  
 East the blush about to climb;  
 One another fair they front,  
 Transient, yet outshine the time;  
 Even as dewlight off the rose  
 In the mind a jewel sows.  
 Thus opposing grandeurs live  
 Here if Beauty be their dower:  
 Doth she of her spirit give,  
 Fleetingness will spare her flower.  
 This is in the tune we play,  
 Which no spring of strength would quell;  
 In subduing does not slay;  
 Guides the channel, guards the well:  
 Tempered holds the young blood-heat,  
 Yet through measured grave accord,  
 Hears the heart of wildness beat  
 Like a centaur's hoof on sward.  
 Drink the sense the notes infuse,  
 You a larger self will find:  
 Sweetest fellowship ensues  
 With the creatures of your kind.  
 Ay, and Love, if Love it be  
 Flaming over I and ME,  
 Love meet they who do not shove  
 Cravings in the van of Love.  
 Courly dames are here to woo,  
 Knowing love if it be true.  
 Reverence the blossom-shoot  
 Fervently, they are the fruit.  
 Mark them stepping, hear them talk,  
 Goddess, is no myth inane,  
 You will say of those who walk  
 In the woods of Westermain.  
 Waters that from throat and thigh  
 Dart the sun his arrows back;  
 Leaves that on a woodland sigh  
 Chat of secret things no lack;  
 Shadowy branch-leaves, waters clear.  
 Bare or veiled they move sincere;  
 Not by slavish terrors tripped;  
 Being anew in nature dipped,  
 Growths of what they step on, these;  
 With the roots the grace of trees.  
 Casket-breasts they give, nor hide,  
 For a tyrant's flattered pride,  
 Mind, which nourished not by light,  
 Lurks the shuffling trickster sprite:  
 Whereof are strange tales to tell;  
 Some in blood writ, tombed in bell.  
 Here the ancient battle ends,  
 Joining two astonished friends,  
 Who the kiss can give and take  
 With more warmth than in that world  
 Where the tiger claws the snake,  
 Snake her tiger clasps infurled,  
 And the issue of their fight  
 Peoples lands in snarling plight.  
 Here her splendid beast she leads  
 Silken-leashed and decked with weeds  
 Wild as he, but breathing faint  
 Sweetness of unfelt constraint.

Love, the great volcano, flings  
 Fires of lower Earth to sky;  
 Love, the sole permitted, sings  
 Sovereignly of *ME* and *I*.  
 Bowers he has of sacred shade,  
 Spaces of superb parade,  
 Voiceful . . . But bring you a note  
 Wrangling, howsoe'er remote,  
 Discords out of discord spin  
 Round and round derisive din:  
 Sudden will a pallor pant  
 Chill at screeches miscreant;  
 Owls or spectres, thick they flee;  
 Nightmare upon horror broods;  
 Hooded laughter, monkish glee,  
 Gaps the vital air.  
 Enter these enchanted woods  
 You who dare.

## IV

You must love the light so well  
 That no darkness will seem fell.  
 Love it so you could accost  
 Fellowly a livid ghost.  
 Whish! the phantom wisps away,  
 Owns him smoke to cocks of day.  
 In your breast the light must burn  
 Fed of you, like corn in quern  
 Ever plumping while the wheel  
 Speeds the mill and drains the meal.  
 Light to light sees little strange,  
 Only features heavenly new;  
 Then you touch the nerve of Change,  
 Then of Earth you have the clue;  
 Then her two-sexed meanings melt  
 Through you, wed the thought and felt.  
 Sameness locks no scurvy pond  
 Here for Custom, crazy-fond:  
 Change is on the wing to bud  
 Rose in brain from rose in blood.  
 Wisdom throbbing shall you see  
 Central in complexity;  
 From her pasture 'mid the beasts  
 Rise to her ethereal feasts,  
 Not, though lightnings track your wit  
 Starward, scorning them you quit:  
 For be sure the bravest wing  
 Preenes it in our common spring,  
 Thence along the vault to soar,  
 You with others, gathering more,  
 Glad of more, till you reject  
 Your proud title of elect,  
 Perilous even here while few  
 Roam the arched greenwood with you.  
 Heed that snare.  
 Muffled by his cavern-cowl  
 Squats the scaly Dragon-fowl,  
 Who was lord ere light you drank,  
 And lest blood of knightly rank  
 Stream, let not your fair princess  
 Stray: he holds the leagues in stress,  
 Watches keenly there.  
 Oft has he been riven; slain  
 Is no force in Westermain.

Wait, and we shall forge him curbs,  
Put his fangs to uses, tame,  
Teach him, quick as cunning herbs,  
How to cure him sick and lame.  
Much restricted, much enringed,  
Much he frets, the hooked and winged,  
Never known to spare.

'T is enough: the name of Sage  
Hits no thing in nature, nought;  
Man the least, save when grave Age  
From yon Dragon guards his thought.  
Eye him when you hearken dumb  
To what words from Wisdom come,  
When she says how few are by  
Listening to her, eye his eye.

Self, his name declare.  
Him shall Change, transforming late,  
Wonderously renovate.  
Hug himself the creature may:  
What he hugs is loathed decay.  
Crying, slip thy scales, and slough!  
Change will strip his armour off;  
Make of him who was all maw,  
Inly only thrilling-shrewd,  
Such a servant as none saw  
Through his days of dragonhood.  
Days when growling o'er his bone,  
Sharpened he for mine and thine;  
Sensitive within alone;  
Scaly as in clefts of pine.  
Change, the strongest son of Life,  
Has the Spirit here to wife.  
Lo, their young of vivid breed,  
Bear the lights that onward speed,  
Threading thickets, mounting glades,  
Up the verdurous colonnades,  
Round the fluttered curves, and down,  
Out of sight of Earth's blue crown,  
Whither, in her central space,  
Spouts the Fount and Lure o' the chase.  
Fount unresting, Lure divine!  
There meet all: too late look most.  
Fire in water hued as wine,  
Springs amid a shadowy host;  
Circled: one close-headed mob,  
Breathless, scanning divers heaps  
Where a Heart begins to throb,  
Where it ceases, slow, with leaps.  
And 't is very strange, 't is said,  
How you spy in each of them  
Semblance of that Dragon red,  
As the oak in bracken-stem.  
And, 't is said, how each and each:  
Which commences, which subsides:  
First my Dragon! doth beseech  
Her who food for all provides.  
And she answers with no sign;  
Utters neither yea nor nay;  
Fires the water hued as wine;  
Kneads another spark in clay.  
Terror is about her hid;  
Silence of the thunders locked;  
Lightnings lining the shut lid;  
Fixity on quaking rocked.

Lo, you look at Flow and Drought  
Interflashed and interwrought:  
Ended is begun, begun  
Ended, quick as torrents run.  
Young Impulsion spouts to sink;  
Luridness and lustre link;  
'T is your come and go of breath;  
Mirrored pants the Life, the Death;  
Each of, either reaped and sown:  
Rosiest rosy wanes to crone.  
See you, so? your senses drift;  
'T is a shuttle weaving swift.  
Look with spirit past the sense,  
Spirit shines in permanence.  
That is She, the view of whom  
Is the dust within the tomb,  
Is the inner blush above,  
Look to loathe, or look to love;  
Think her Lump, or know her Flame;  
Dread her scourge, or read her aim;  
Shoot your hungers from their nerve;  
Or, in her example, serve.  
Some have found her sitting grave;  
Laughing, some; or, browed with sweat,  
Hurling dust of fool and knave  
In a hissing smithy's jet.  
More it were not well to speak;  
Burn to see, you need but seek.  
Once beheld she gives the key  
Airing every doorway, she.  
Little can you stop or steer  
Ere of her you are the seér.  
On the surface she will witch,  
Rendering Beauty yours, but gaze  
Under, and the soul is rich  
Past computing, past amaze.  
Then is courage that endures  
Even her awful tremble yours.  
Then, the reflex of that Fount  
Spied below, will Reason mount  
Lordly and a quenchless force,  
Lighting Pain to its mad source,  
Scaring Fear till Fear escapes,  
Shot through all its phantom shapes.  
Then your spirit will perceive  
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins;  
Where the passions interweave,  
How the serpent tangle spins  
Of the sense of Earth misprised,  
Brainlessly unrecognized;  
She being Spirit in her clods,  
Footway to the God of Gods.  
Then for you are pleasures pure,  
Sureties as the stars are sure:  
Not the wanton beckoning flags  
Which, of flattery and delight,  
Wax to the grim Habit-Hags  
Riding souls of men to night:  
Pleasures that through blood run sane,  
Quickenning spirit from the brain.  
Each of each in sequent birth,  
Blood and brain and spirit, three  
(Say the deepest gnomes of Earth).  
Join for true felicity.

Are they parted, then expect  
 Some one sailing will be wrecked:  
 Separate hunting are they sped,  
 Scan the morsel coveted.  
 Earth that Triad is: she hides  
 Joy from him who that divides;  
 Showers it when the three are one  
 Glassing her in union.  
 Earth your haven, Earth your helm,  
 You command a double realm:  
 Labouring here to pay your debt,  
 Till your little sun shall set;  
 Leaving her the future task:  
 Loving her too well to ask.  
 Eglantine that climbs the yew,  
 She her darkest wreathes for those  
 Knowing her the Ever-new,  
 And themselves the kin o' the rose.  
 Life, the chisel, axe and sword,  
 Wield who have her depths explored:  
 Life, the dream, shall be their robe,  
 Large as air about the globe;  
 Life, the question, hear its cry  
 Echoed with concordant Why;  
 Life, the small self-dragon ramped,  
 Thrill for service to be stamped.  
 Ay, and over every height  
 Life for them shall wave a wand:  
 That, the last, where sits affright,  
 Homely shows the stream beyond.  
 Love the light and be its lynx,  
 You will track' her and attain;  
 Read her as no cruel Sphinx  
 In the woods of Westermain.  
 Daily fresh the woods are ranged;  
 Gloom which otherwhere appal,  
 Sounded: here, their worths exchanged,  
 Urban joins with pastoral:  
 Little lost, save what may drop  
 Husk-like, and the mind preserves.  
 Natural overgrowths they lop,  
 Yet from nature neither swerves,  
 Trained or savage: for this cause:  
 Of our Earth they ply the laws,  
 Have in Earth their feeding root,  
 Mind of man and bent of brute.  
 Hear that song; both wild and ruled.  
 Hear it: is it wail or mirth?  
 Ordered, bubbled, quite unschooled?  
 None, and all: it springs of Earth.  
 O but hear it! 't is the mind;  
 Mind that with deep Earth unites,  
 Round the solid trunk to wind  
 Rings of clasping parasites.  
 Music have you there to feed  
 Simplest and most soaring need.  
 Free to wind, and in desire  
 Winding, they to her attached  
 Feel the trunk a spring of fire,  
 And ascend to heights unmatched,  
 Whence the tidal world is viewed  
 As a sea of windy wheat,  
 Momently black, barren, rude;

Golden-brown, for harvest meet;  
 Dragon-reaped from folly-sown;  
 Bride-like to the sickle-blade:  
 Quick it varies, while the moan,  
 Moan of a sad creature strayed,  
 Chiefly is its voice. So flesh  
 Conjures tempest-flails to thresh  
 Good from worthless. Some clear lamps  
 Light it; more of dead marsh-damps.  
 Monster is it still, and blind,  
 Fit but to be led by Pain.  
 Glance we at the paths behind,  
 Fruitful sight has Westermain.  
 There we laboured, and in turn  
 Forward our blown lamps discern,  
 As you see on the dark deep  
 Far the loftier billows leap,  
 Foam for beacon bear.  
 Hither, hither, if you will,  
 Drink instruction, or instil,  
 Run the woods like vernal sap,  
 Crying, hail to luminousness!  
 But have care.  
 In yourself may lurk the trap:  
 On conditions they caress.  
 Here you meet the light invoked:  
 Here is never secret cloaked.  
 Doubt you with the monster's fry  
 All his orbit may exclude;  
 Are you of the stiff, the dry,  
 Cursing the not understood;  
 Grasp you with the monster's claws;  
 Govern with his truncheon-saws;  
 Hate, the shadow of a grain;  
 You are lost in Westermain:  
 Earthward swoops a vulture sun,  
 Nighted upon carrion:  
 Straightway venom winecups shout  
 Toasts to One whose eyes are out:  
 Flowers along the reeling floor  
 Drip henbane and hellebore:  
 Beauty, of her tresses shorn,  
 Shrieks as nature's maniac:  
 Hideousness on hoof and horn  
 Tumbles, yapping in her track:  
 Haggard Wisdom, stately once,  
 Leers fantastical and trips:  
 Allegory drums the sconce,  
 Impiousness nibble-nips.  
 Imp that dances, imp that flits,  
 Imp o' the demon-growing girl,  
 Maddest! whirl with imp o' the pits  
 Round you, and with them you whirl  
 Fast where pours the fountain-rock  
 Out of Him whose eyes are out:  
 Multitudes on multitudes,  
 Drenched in wallowing devilry:  
 And you ask where you may be,  
 In what reek of a lair  
 Given to bones and ogre-broods:  
 And they yell you Where.  
 Enter these enchanted woods,  
 You who dare.

## THE LARK ASCENDING

[1862.]

HE rises and begins to round,  
 He drops the silver chain of sound,  
 Of many links without a break,  
 In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,  
 All interwolved and spreading wide,  
 Like water-dimples down a tide  
 Where ripple ripple overcurls  
 And eddy into eddy whirls;  
 A press of hurried notes that run  
 So fleet they scarce are more than one,  
 Yet changeingly the trills repeat  
 And linger ringing while they fleet,  
 Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear  
 To her beyond the handmaid ear,  
 Who sits beside our inner springs,  
 Too often dry for this he brings,  
 Which seems the very jet of earth  
 At sight of sun, her music's mirth,  
 As up he wings the spiral stair,  
 A song of light, and pierces air  
 With fountain ardour, fountain play,  
 To reach the shining tops of day,  
 And drink in everything discerned  
 An ecstasy to music turned,  
 Impelled by what his happy bill  
 Dispurses; drinking, showering still,  
 Unthinking save that he may give  
 His voice the outlet, there to live  
 Renewed in endless notes of glee,  
 So thirsty of his voice is he,  
 For all to hear and all to know  
 That he is joy, awake, aglow,  
 The tumult of the heart to hear  
 Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,  
 And know the pleasure sprinkled bright  
 By simple singing of delight,  
 Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,  
 Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained  
 Without a break, without a fall,  
 Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,  
 Perennial, quavering up the chord  
 Like myriad dews of sunny sward  
 That trembling into fulness shine,  
 And sparkle dropping argentine;  
 Such wooing as the ear receives  
 From zephyr caught in choric leaves  
 Of aspens when their chattering net  
 Is flushed to white with shivers wet;  
 And such the water-spirit's chime  
 On mountain heights in morning's prime,  
 Too freshly sweet to seem excess,  
 Too animate to need a stress;  
 But wider over many heads  
 The starry voice ascending spreads,  
 Awakening, as it waxes thin,  
 The best in us to him akin;  
 And every face to watch him raised,  
 Puts on the light of children praised,  
 So rich our human pleasure ripes  
 When sweetness on sincereness pipes,

Though nought be promised from the seas,  
 But only a soft-ruffling breeze  
 Sweep glittering on a still content,  
 Serenity in ravishment.

For singing till his heaven fills,  
 'T is love of earth that he instils,  
 And ever winging up and up,  
 Our valley is his golden cup,  
 And he the wine which overflows  
 To lift us with him as he goes:  
 The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine  
 He is, the hills, the human line,  
 The meadows green, the fallows brown,  
 The dreams of labour in the town;  
 He sings the sap, the quickened veins;  
 The wedding song of sun and rains  
 He is, the dance of children, thanks  
 Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,  
 And eye of violets while they breathe;  
 All these the circling song will wreath,  
 And you shall hear the herb and tree,  
 The better heart of men shall see,  
 Shall feel celestially, as long  
 As you crave nothing save the song.  
 Was never voice of ours could say  
 Our inmost in the sweetest way,  
 Like yonder voice aloft, and link  
 All hearers in the song they drink.  
 Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,  
 Our passion is too full in flood,  
 We want the key of his wild note  
 Of truthful in a tuneful throat,  
 The song seraphically free  
 Of taint of personality,  
 So pure that it salutes the suns  
 The voice of one for millions,  
 In whom the millions rejoice  
 For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,  
 Now names, and men still housing here,  
 Whose lives, by many a battle-dint  
 Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,  
 Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet  
 For song our highest heaven to greet:  
 Whom heavenly singing gives us new,  
 Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,  
 From firmest base to farthest leap,  
 Because their love of Earth is deep,  
 And they are warriors in accord  
 With life to serve, and pass reward,  
 So touching purest and so heard  
 In the brain's reflex of yon bird:  
 Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,  
 Through self-forgetfulness divine,  
 In them, that song aloft maintains,  
 To fill the sky and thrill the plains  
 With showerings drawn from human  
 stores,  
 As he to silence nearer soars,  
 Extends the world at wings and dome,  
 More spacious making more our home,  
 Till lost on his aerial rings  
 In light, and then the fancy sings.

## MELAMPUS

[1862.]

WITH love exceeding a simple love of the things  
 That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck;  
 Or change their perch on a beat of quivering wings  
 From branch to branch, only restful to pipe and peck;  
 Or, bristled, curl at a touch their snouts in a ball;  
 Or cast their web between bramble and thorny hook;  
 The good physician Melampus, loving them all,  
 Among them walked, as a scholar who reads a book.

For him the woods were a home and gave him the key  
 Of knowledge, thirst for their treasures in herbs and flowers.  
 The secrets held by the creatures nearer than we  
 To earth he sought, and the link of their life with ours:  
 And where alike we are, unlike where, and the veined  
 Division, veined parallel, of a blood that flows  
 In them, in us, from the source by man unattained  
 Save marks he well what the mystical woods disclose.

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast  
 Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,  
 The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best  
 Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape:  
 For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,  
 As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:  
 They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,  
 And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,  
 Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain  
 Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods  
 Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane  
 The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limns

To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life  
 Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns  
 Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.  
 Now sleeping once on a day of marvellous fire,  
 A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret  
 That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,  
 Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set  
 Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue  
 Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears  
 A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,  
 He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!  
 A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech  
 Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves  
 To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach;  
 He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.  
 No fears have I of a man who goes with his head  
 To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:  
 I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;  
 I pipe him much for his good could he understand.  
 Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist:  
 He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.  
 Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,  
 He spied the birds and the bill of the speaking bird.  
 His cushion mosses in shades of various green,  
 The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake  
 Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,  
 It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.  
 Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,  
 As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,  
 Ere yet they dart in a brook are one bubble-pool  
 To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.

The soul of light vivid shone, a stream  
within stream;  
The soul of sound from a musical shell  
outflew;  
Where others hear but a hum and see but  
a beam,  
The tongue and eye of the fountain of  
life he knew.

He knew the Hours: they were round him,  
laden with seed  
Of hours bestrown upon vapour, and one  
by one

They winged as ripened in fruit the burden  
decreed  
For each to scatter; they flushed like  
the buds in sun,  
Bequeathing seed to successive similar  
rings,  
Their sisters, bearers to men of what  
men have earned:  
He knew them, talked with the yet unred-  
dened; the stings,  
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms  
divined, discerned.

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,  
By riddling fingers expanded, oft  
watched in growth  
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's  
quicken wheat,  
Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the  
plants of sloth,  
The plants of rigidness, answered question  
and squeeze,  
Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninvit-  
ing, bent,  
Yet making harmony breathe of life and  
disease,  
The deeper chord of a wonderful instru-  
ment.

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and  
the fates  
We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears  
were charged  
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble  
hates,  
With music wrought of distraction his  
hear enlarged.  
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer,  
though mute,  
He drew the Master of harmonies,  
voiced or stilled,  
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-  
root  
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unful-  
filled.

Him Phœbus, lending to darkness colour  
and form  
Of light's excess, many lessons and  
counsels gave;

Showed Wisdom lord of the human intri-  
cate swarm,  
And whence prophetic it looks on the  
hives that rave,  
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to  
acquire,  
And where it stands, in the centre of life  
a sphere;  
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the raptur-  
ous lyre,  
He said was Wisdom, and struck him  
the notes to hear.

Sweet, sweet: 't was glory of vision, honey,  
the breeze  
In heat, the run of the river on root and  
stone,  
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides  
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine,  
his own.  
In stately order, evolved of sound into  
sight,  
From sight to sound intershifting, the  
man descried  
The growths of earth, his adored, like day  
out of night,  
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song  
allied.

And there vitality, there, there solely in  
song,  
Resides, where earth and her uses to men,  
their needs,  
Their forceful cravings, the theme are:  
there is it strong,  
The Master said: and the studious eye  
that reads,  
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods  
on the mount),  
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is  
bound.  
Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a  
fount  
To spring perennial; well-spring is com-  
mon ground.

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and  
sage,  
He served them, loving them, healing  
them; sick or maimed  
Or them that frenzied in some delirious  
rage  
Outran the measure, his juice of the  
woods reclaimed.  
He played on men, as his master, Phœbus,  
on strings  
Melodious: as the God did he drive and  
check,  
Through love exceeding a simple love of  
the things  
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody  
wreck.

## LOVE IN THE VALLEY

[1862.]

UNDER yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,  
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,  
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,  
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.  
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,  
Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,  
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:  
Then would she hold me and never let me go?

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,  
Swift as the swallow along the river's light  
Circling the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,  
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.  
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,  
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,  
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,  
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,  
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,  
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,  
More love should I have, and much less care.  
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,  
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,  
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,  
I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows  
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.  
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:  
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.  
Deals she an unkindness, 't is but her rapid measure,

Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:  
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones  
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping  
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.  
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,  
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar.  
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:  
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.  
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,  
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,  
Arm in arm, all against the raying West,  
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,  
Brave is her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.  
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking  
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.  
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;  
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers  
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,  
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,  
Threading it with colour, like yewberries the yew.  
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave  
East deepens  
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.  
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;  
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting  
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,  
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter  
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.

Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom  
 Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend  
 Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset  
 Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window  
 Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,  
 Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily  
 Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.  
 When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle  
 In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,  
 Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily  
 Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,  
 Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,  
 Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,  
 Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.  
 Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,  
 Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.  
 Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever  
 Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;  
 Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.  
 My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,  
 Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.  
 Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,  
 Coming the rose: and unaware a cry Springs in her bosom for odours and for colour,  
 Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,  
 Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy rain:

Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel  
 She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.  
 Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:  
 She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking mirth.  
 So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder  
 Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.  
 Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,  
 Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.  
 I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones:  
 O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.  
 You, my wild one, you tell of honied field-rose,  
 Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,  
 They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,  
 You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.  
 . . .  
 Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,  
 Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.  
 Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine  
 Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.  
 Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?  
 Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,  
 Luring her to love; she sleeps; the starry jasmine  
 Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.  
 Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;  
 Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf;  
 Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;  
 Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.  
 Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;  
 Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:  
 Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,  
 Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

This I may know: her dressing and undressing  
 Such a change of light shows as when  
     the skies in sport  
 Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging  
     over thunder  
 Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into  
     port  
 White sails furl; or on the ocean borders  
     White sails lean along the waves leaping  
         green.  
 Visions of her shower before me, but from  
     eyesight  
 Guarded she would be like the sun were  
     she seen.  
 Front door and back of the mossed old  
     farmhouse  
 Open with the morn, and in a breezy  
     link  
 Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed  
     orchard,  
     Green across a rill where on sand the  
         minnows wink.  
 Busy in the grass the early sun of summer  
     Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting  
         notes  
 Call my darling up with round and roguish  
     challenge:  
     Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing  
         throats!

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white  
     dairy  
 Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there  
     the boys from school,  
 Cricketing below, rushed brown and red  
     with sunshine;  
     O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed  
         cool!  
 Spying from the farm, herself she fetched  
     a pitcher  
     Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn  
         the beak.  
 Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tip-toe,  
     Said, 'I will kiss you'; she laughed and  
         leaned her cheek.  
 Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red  
     roof  
     Through the long noon coo, crooning  
         through the coo.  
 Loose droop the leaves, and down the  
     sleepy roadway  
     Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops  
         the blue.  
 Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,  
     Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and  
         fly.  
 Nowhere is she seen\*, and if I see her  
     nowhere,  
 Lightning may come, straight rains and  
     tiger sky.

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!  
 O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!  
 O the treasure-tresses one another over  
     Nodding! O the girdle slack about the  
         waist!  
 Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet  
 Quick amid the wheatears: wound about  
     the waist,  
 Gathered, see these brides of Earth one  
     blush of ripeness!  
 O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!  
 Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk  
     drops,  
 Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded  
     snow:  
 Eastward large and still lights up a bower  
     of moonrise,  
     Whence at her leisure steps the moon  
         aglow.  
 Nightlong on black print-branches our  
     beech-tree  
 Gazes in this whiteness; nightlong could I.  
 Here may life on death or death on life be  
     painted.  
 Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot  
     die!

Gossips count her faults: they scour a narrow chamber  
     Where there is no window, read not  
         heaven or her.  
 When she was a tiny, one aged woman  
     quavers,  
     Plucks at my heart and leads me by the  
         ear.  
 Faults she had once as she learnt to run  
     and tumbled:  
     Faults of feature some see, beauty not  
         complete.  
 Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy  
     Earth and air, may have faults from  
         head to feet.  
 Hither she comes; she comes to me; she  
     lingers,  
     Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in  
         new surprise  
 High rise the lashes in wonder of a  
     stranger;  
     Yet am I the light and living of her  
         eyes.  
 Something friends have told her fills her  
     heart to brimming,  
     Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her,  
         and tames.—  
 Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,  
     Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in  
         our names.

Soon will she lie like a white frost sunrise.  
 Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale  
     as rye,  
 Long since your sheaves have yielded to the  
     thresher,  
     Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses  
     fly.  
 Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.  
     Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged  
     Spring!  
 Sing from the South-West, bring her back  
     the truants,  
     Nightingale and swallow, song and dip-  
     ping wing.  
 Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April  
     Spreading bough on bough a primrose  
     mountain, you  
 Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the sky-  
     fields,  
     Youngest green transfused in silver shin-  
     ing through:  
 Fairer than the lily, than the wild white  
     cherry:  
     Fair as in image my seraph love appears  
 Borne to me by dreams when dawn is  
     at my eyelids:  
     Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on  
     tears.

Could I find a place to be alone with  
 heaven,  
     I would speak my heart out: heaven is  
     my need,  
 Every woodland tree is flushing like the  
     dogwood,  
     Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like  
     the reed.  
 Flushing like the dogwood crimson in  
     October;  
     Streaming like the flag-reed South-West  
     blown;  
 Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted  
     whitebeam:  
     All seem to know what is for heaven  
     alone.

### JUGGLING JERRY

[1862.]

PITCH here the tent, while the old horse  
 grazes:  
 By the old hedge-side we 'll halt a stage.  
 It 's nigh my last above the daisies:  
     My next leaf 'll be man's blank page.  
 Yes, my old girl! and it 's no use crying:  
     Juggler, constable, king, must bow.  
 One that outjuggles all 's been spying  
     Long to have me, and he has me now.  
 We 've travelled times to this old common:  
     Often we 've hung our pots in the gorse.  
 We 've had a stirring life, old woman!  
     You, and I, and the old grey horse.

Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,  
     Found us coming to their call:  
 Now they 'll miss us at our stations:  
     There 's a Juggler outjuggles all!  
 Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!  
     Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.  
 Easy to think that grieving 's folly,  
     When the hand 's firm as driven stakes!  
 Ay, when we 're strong, and braced, and  
     manful,  
     Life 's a sweet fiddle: but we 're a batch  
 Born to become the Great Juggler's han'-  
     ful:  
     Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.  
 Here 's where the lads of the village  
     cricket:  
     I was a lad not wide from here:  
 Could n't I whip off the bale from the  
     wicket?  
     Like an old world those days appear!  
 Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatched ale-  
     house—I know them!  
     They are old friends of my halts, and  
     seem,  
 Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:  
     Juggling don't hinder the heart's es-  
     teem.  
 Juggling 's no sin, for we must have vic-  
     tual:  
 Nature allows us to bait for the fool.  
 Holding one's own makes us juggle no  
     little;  
     But, to increase it, hard juggling 's the  
     rule.  
 You that are sneering at my profession,  
     Have n't you juggled a vast amount?  
 There 's the Prime Minister, in one Ses-  
     sion,  
     Juggles more games than my sins 'll  
     count.  
 I 've murdered insects with mock thunder:  
     Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.  
 I 've made bread from the bump of won-  
     der:  
     That 's my business, and there 's my  
     tale.  
 Fashion and rank all praised the professor:  
     Ay! and I 've had my smile from the  
     Queen:  
 Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!  
     Ain't this a sermon on that scene?  
 I 've studied men from my topsy-turvy  
     Close, and, I reckon, rather true.  
 Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy:  
     Most, a dash between the two.  
 But it 's a woman, old girl, that makes me  
     Think more kindly of the race:  
 And it 's a woman, old girl, that shakes me  
     When the Great Juggler I must face.

We two were married, due and legal:  
 Honest we 've lived since we 've been  
 one.  
 Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:  
 You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.  
 Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!  
 All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.  
 Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!  
 Now from his old girl he 's juggled  
 away.

It's past parsons to console us:  
 No, nor no doctor fetch for me:  
 I can die without my bolus;  
 Two of a trade, lass, never agree!  
 Parson and Doctor!—don't they love  
 rarely,  
 Fighting the devil in other men's fields!  
 Stand up yourself and match him fairly:  
 Then see how the rascal yields!

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting  
 Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:  
 Coin I 've stored, and you won't be want-  
 ing:  
 You sha'n't beg from the troughs and  
 tubs.  
 Nobly you 've stuck to me, though in his  
 kitchen  
 Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!  
 Palaces you could have ruled and grown  
 rich in,  
 But your old Jerry you never forsook.

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;  
 Let 's have comfort and be at peace.  
 Once a stout draught made me light as a  
 linnet.  
 Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.  
 May be—for none see in that black hol-  
 low—  
 It 's just a place where we 're held in  
 pawn,  
 And, when the Great Juggler makes as to  
 swallow,  
 It 's just the sword trick—I ain't quite  
 gone!

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,  
 Gold-like and warm: it 's the prime of  
 May.  
 Better than mortar, brick and putty,  
 Is God's house on a blowing day.  
 Lean me more up the mound; now I feel  
 it:  
 All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?  
 There 's the world laughing, as if to con-  
 ceal it,  
 But He 's by us, juggling the change.

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,  
 Once—it 's long gone—when two gulls  
 we beheld,  
 Which, as the moon got up, were flying  
 Down a big wave that sparked and  
 swelled.

Crack, went a gun: one fell: the second  
 Wheeled round him twice, and was off  
 for new luck:  
 There in the dark her white wing beck-  
 on'd:—  
 Drop me a kiss—I 'm the bird dead-  
 struck!

## LUCIFER IN STARLIGHT

[1862.]

ON a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose  
 Tired of his dark dominion swung the  
 fiend  
 Above the rolling ball in cloud part  
 screened,  
 Where sinners hugged their spectre of re-  
 pose.  
 Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were  
 those.  
 And now upon his western wing he leaned,  
 Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands  
 careened,  
 Now the black planet shadowed Arctic  
 snows.  
 Soaring through wider zones that pricked  
 his scars  
 With memory of the old revolt from Awe,  
 He reached a middle height, and at the  
 stars,  
 Which are the brain of heaven, he looked,  
 and sank.  
 Around the ancient track marched, rank  
 on rank,  
 The army of unalterable law.

## SENSE AND SPIRIT

[1862.]

THE senses loving Earth or well or ill,  
 Ravel yet more the riddle of our lot.  
 The mind is in their trammels, and lights  
 not  
 By trimming fear-bred tales; nor does the  
 will  
 To find in nature things which less may  
 chill  
 An ardour that desires, unknowing what.  
 Till we conceive her living we go dis-  
 traught,  
 At best but circle-windsails of a mill.  
 Seeing she lives, and of her joy of life  
 Creatively has given us blood and breath  
 For endless war and never wound un-  
 healed,  
 The gloomy Wherefore of our battle-field  
 Solves in the Spirit, wrought of her  
 through strife  
 To read her own and trust her down to  
 death.

## THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

[1862.]

THY greatest knew thee, Mother Earth;  
unsoured  
He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to  
hell  
Of human passions, but of love deflowered  
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee  
well.  
Thence came the honeyed corner at his  
lips,  
The conquering smile wherein his spirit  
sails  
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave  
whips,  
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,  
Close mirrors of us: thence had he the  
laugh  
We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand  
beeves  
At pasture! thence thy songs, that winnow  
chaff  
From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last  
leaves  
Whirl, if they have no response—they  
enforced  
To fatten Earth when from her soul di-  
vorced.

## THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

(Continued)

How smiles he at a generation ranked  
In gloomy nodding over life! They pass.  
Not he to feed upon a breast unthanked,  
Or eye a beauteous face in a cracked glass.  
But he can spy that little twist of brain  
Which moved some weighty leader of the  
blind,  
Unwitting 't was the goad of personal  
pain,  
To view in curst eclipse our Mother's  
mind,  
And show us of some rigid harridan  
The wretched bondmen till the end of  
time.  
O lived the Master now to paint us Man,  
That little twist of brain would ring a  
chime  
Of whence it came and what it caused, to  
start  
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and  
heart.

## HARD WEATHER

[1888.]

BURSTS from a rending East in flaws  
The young green leaflet's harrier, sworn  
To strew the garden, strip the shaws,  
And show our Spring with banner torn.  
Was ever such virago morn?  
The wind has teeth, the wind has claws.

All the wind's wolves through woods are  
loose.

The wild wind's falconry aloft.  
Shrill underfoot the grassblade shrews,  
At gallop, clumped, and down the croft  
Bestrif by shadows, beaten, tossed;  
It seems a scythe, it seems a rod.  
The howl is up at the howl's accost;  
The shivers greet and the shivers nod.

Is the land ship? we are rolled, we drive  
Tritonly, cleaving hiss and hum;  
Whirl with the dead, or mount or dive,  
Or down in dregs, or on in scum.  
And drums the distant, pipes the near,  
And vale and hill are grey in grey,  
As when the surge is crumbling sheer,  
And sea-mews wing the haze of spray.  
Clouds—are they bony witches?—swarms,  
Darting swift on the robber's flight,  
Hurry an infant sky in arms:  
It peeps, it becks; 't is day, 't is night.  
Black while over the loop of blue  
The swathe is closed, like shroud on corse.  
Lo, as if swift the Furies flew,  
The Fates at heel at a cry to horse!

Interpret me the savage whirr:  
And is it Nature scourged, or she,  
Her offspring's executioner,  
Reducing land to barren sea?  
But is there meaning in a day  
When this fierce angel of the air,  
Intent to throw, and haply slay,  
Can, for what breath of life we bear  
Exact the wrestle? Call to mind  
The many meanings glistening up  
When Nature to her nurslings kind,  
Hands them the fruitage and the cup!  
And seek we rich significance  
Not otherwhere than with those tides  
Of pleasure on the sunned expanse,  
Whose flow deludes, whose ebb derides?

Look in the face of men who fare  
Lock-mouthed, a match in lungs and thews  
For this fierce angel of the air,  
To twist with him and take his bruise.  
That is the face beloved of old  
Of Earth, young mother of her brood:  
Nor broken for us shows the mould  
When muscle is in mind renewed:  
Though farther from her nature rude,  
Yet nearer to her spirit's hold:  
And though of gentler mood serene,  
Still forceful of her fountain-jet,  
So shall her blows be shrewdly met,  
Be luminously read the scene  
Where Life is at her grindstone set,  
That she may give us edginge keen,  
String us for battle, till as play  
The common strokes of fortune shower.  
Such meaning in a dagger-day  
Our wits may clasp to wax in power,

Yea, feel us warmer at her breast,  
By spin of blood in lusty drill,  
Then when her honeyed hands caressed,  
And Pleasure, sapping, seemed to fill.

Behold the life at ease; it drifts.  
The sharpened life commands its course.  
She winnows, winnows roughly; sifts,  
To dip her chosen in her source:  
Contention is the vital force,  
Whence pluck they brain, her prize of  
gifts.

Sky of the senses! on which height,  
Not disconnected, yet released,  
They see how spirit comes to light,  
Through conquest of the inner beast,  
Which Measure tames to movement sane,  
In harmony with what is fair.  
Never is Earth misread by brain:  
That is the welling of her, there  
The mirror: with one step beyond,  
For likewise is it voice; and more,  
Benignest kinship bids respond,  
When wail the weak, and then restore  
Whom days as fell as this may rive,  
While Earth sits ebon in her gloom,  
Us atomies of life alive  
Unheeding, bent on life to come.  
Her children of the labouring brain,  
These are the champions of the race,  
True parents, and the sole humane,  
With understanding for their base.  
Earth yields the milk, but all her mind  
Is vowed to thresh for stouter stock.  
Her passion for old giantkind,  
That scaled the mount, uphurled the rock,  
Devolves on them who read aright  
Her meaning and devoutly serve;  
Nor in her starlessness of night  
Peruse her with the craven nerve:  
But even as she from grass to corn,  
To eagle high from grubbing mole,  
Prove in strong brain her noblest born,  
The station for the flight of soul.

#### THE THRUSH IN FEBRUARY

[1888.]

I KNOW him, February's thrush,  
And loud at eve he valentines  
On sprays that paw the naked bush  
Where soon will sprout the thorns and  
bines.

Now ere the foreign singer thrills  
Our vale his plain-song pipe he pours,  
A herald of the million bills;  
And heed him not, the loss is yours.

My study, flanked with ivied fir  
And budded beech with dry leaves curled,  
Perched over yew and juniper,  
He neighbours, piping to his world:—

The wooded pathways dank on brown,  
The branches on grey cloud a web,  
The long green roller of the down,  
An image of the deluge-ebb:—

And farther, they may hear along  
The stream beneath the poplar row,  
By fits, like welling rocks, the song  
Spouts of a blushing Spring in flow.

But most he loves to front the vale  
When waves of warm South-western rains  
Have left our heavens clear in pale,  
With faintest beck of moist red veins:

Vermilion wings, by distance held  
To pause aflight while fleeting swift:  
And high aloft the pearl inshelled  
Her lucid glow in glow will lift;

A little south of coloured sky;  
Directing, gravely amorous,  
The human of a tender eye  
Through pure celestial on us:

Remote, not alien; still, not cold;  
Unraying yet, more pearl than star;  
She seems a while the vale to hold  
In trance, and homelier makes the far.

Then Earth her sweet unscented breathes;  
An orb of lustre quits the height;  
And like broad iris-flags, in wreaths  
The sky takes darkness, long ere quite.

His Island voice then shall you hear,  
Nor ever after separate  
From such a twilight of the year  
Advancing to the vernal gate.

He sings me, out of Winter's throat,  
The young time with the life ahead;  
And my young time his leaping note  
Recalls to spirit-mirth from dead.

Imbedded in a land of greed,  
Of mammon-quakings dire as Earth's,  
My care was but to soothe my need;  
At peace among the little worths.

To light and song my yearning aimed;  
To that deep breast of song and light  
Which men have barrenest proclaimed;  
As 't is to senses pricked with fright.

So mine are these new fruitings rich  
The simple to the common brings;  
I keep the youth of souls who pitch  
Their joy in this old heart of things:

Who feel the Coming young as aye,  
Thrice hopeful on the ground we plough;  
Alive for life, awake to die;  
One voice to cheer the seedling Now.

Full lasting is the song, though he,  
The singer, passes: lasting too,  
For souls not lent in usury,  
The rapture of the forward view.

With that I bear my senses fraught  
Till what I am fast shoreward drives.  
They are the vessel of the Thought.  
The vessel splits, the Thought survives.

Nought else are we when sailing brave,  
Save husks to raise and bid it burn.  
Glimpse of its livingness will wave  
A light the senses can discern

Across the river of the death,  
Their close. Meanwhile, O twilight bird  
Of promise! bird of happy breath!  
I hear, I would the 'City heard.

The City of the smoky fray;  
A prodded ox, it drags and moans:  
Its Morrow no man's child; its Day  
A vulture's morsel beaked to bones.

It strives without a mark for strife;  
It feasts beside a famished host:  
The loose restraint of wanton life,  
That threatened penance in the ghost!

Yet there our battle urges; there  
Spring heroes many: issuing thence.  
Names that should leave no vacant air  
For fresh delight in confidence.

Life was to them the bag of grain,  
And Death the weedy harrow's tooth.  
Those warriors of the sighting brain  
Give worn Humanity new youth.

Our song and star are they to lead  
The tidal multitude and blind  
From bestial to the higher breed  
By fighting souls of love divined.

They scorned the ventral dream of peace,  
Unknown in nature. This they knew:  
That life begets with fair increase  
Beyond the flesh, if life be true.

Just reason based on valiant blood,  
The instinct bred afiel'd would match  
To pipe thereof a swelling flood.  
Were men of Earth made wise in watch.

Though now the numbers count as drops  
An urn might bear, they father Time.  
She shapes anew her dusty crops;  
Her quick in their own likeness climb.

Of their own force do they create;  
They climb to light, in her their root.  
Your brutish cry at muffled fate  
She smites with pangs of worse than brute.  
She, judged of shrinking nerves, appears  
A Mother whom no cry can melt;  
But read her past desires and fears,  
The letters on her breast are spelt.

A slayer, yea, as when she pressed  
Her savage to the slaughter-heaps,  
To sacrifice she prompts her best:  
She reaps them as the sower reaps.

But read her thought to speed the race,  
And stars rush forth of blackest night:  
You chill not at a cold embrace  
To come, nor dread a dubious might.

Her double visage, double voice,  
In oneness rise to quench the doubt.  
This breath, her gift, has only choice  
Of service, breathe we in or out.

Since Pain and Pleasure on each hand  
Led our wild steps from slimy rock  
To yonder sweeps of gardenland,  
We breathe but to be sword or block.

The sighting brain her good decree  
Accepts; obeys those guides, in faith,  
By reason hourly fed, that she,  
To some the clod, to some the wraith,

Is more, no mask; a flame, a stream.  
Flame, stream, are we, in mid career  
From torrent source, delirious dream,  
To heaven-reflecting currents clear.

And why the sons of Strength have been  
Her cherished offspring ever; how  
The Spirit served by her is seen  
Through Law; perusing love will show.

Love born of knowledge, love that gains  
Vitality as Earth it mates,  
The meaning of the Pleasures, Pains,  
The Life, the Death, illuminates.

For love we Earth, then serve we all;  
Her mystic secret then is ours:  
We fall, or view our treasures fall,  
Uncloaked, as beholds her flowers

Earth, from a night of frosty wreck,  
Enrobed in morning's mounted fire,  
When lowly, with a broken neck,  
The crocus lays her cheek to mire.

#### OUTER AND INNER

[1888.]

I

FROM twig to twig the spider weaves  
At noon his webbing fine.  
So near to mute the zephyrs flute  
That only leaflets dance.  
The sun draws out of hazel leaves  
A smell of woodland wine.  
I wake a swarm to sudden storm  
At any step's advance,

## II

Along my path is bugloss blue,  
The star with fruit in moss;  
The foxgloves drop from throat to top  
A daily lesser bell.  
The blackest shadow, nurse of dew,  
Has orange skeins across;  
And keenly red is one thin thread  
That flashing seems to swell.

## III

My world I note ere fancy comes,  
Minutest hushed observe:  
What busy bits of motioned wits  
Through antlered mosswork strive.  
But now so low the stillness hums,  
My springs of seeing swerve,  
For half a wink to thrill and think  
The woods with nymphs alive.

## IV

I neighbour the invisible  
So close that my consent  
Is only asked for spirits masked  
To leap from trees and flowers.  
And this because with them I dwell  
In thought, while calmly bent  
To read the lines dear Earth designs  
Shall speak her life on ours.

## V

Accept, she says; it is not hard  
In woods; but she in towns  
Repeats, accept; and have we wept,  
And have we quailed with fears,  
Or shrunk with horrors, sure reward  
We have whom knowledge crowns,  
Who see in mould the rose unfold,  
The soul through blood and tears.

## NATURE AND LIFE

[1888.]

## I

LEAVE the uproar: at a leap  
Thou shalt strike a woodland path,  
Enter silence, not of sleep,  
Under shadows, not of wrath;  
Breath which is the spirit's bath,  
In the old Beginnings find,  
And endow them with a mind,  
Seed for seedling, swathe for swathe.  
That gives Nature to us, this  
Give we her, and so we kiss.

## II

Fruitful is it so: but hear  
How within the shell thou art,  
Music sounds; nor other near  
Can to such a tremor start.  
Of the waves our life is part;

They our running harvests bear:  
Back to them for manful air,  
Laden with the woodland's heart!  
That gives Battle to us, this  
Give we it, and good the kiss.

## DIRGE IN WOODS

[1888.]

A WIND sways the pines,  
And below  
Not a breath of wild air;  
Still as the mosses that glow  
On the flooring and over the lines  
Of the roots here and there.  
The pine-tree drops its dead;  
They are quiet, as under the sea.  
Overhead, overhead  
Rushes life in a race,  
As the clouds the clouds chase;  
And we go,  
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,  
Even we,  
Even so.

## MEDITATION UNDER STARS

[1888.]

WHAT links are ours with orbs that are  
So resolutely far:  
The solitary asks, and they  
Give radiance as from a shield:  
Still at the death of day,  
The seen, the unrevealed.  
Implacable they shine  
To us who would of Life obtain  
An answer for the life we strain,  
To nourish with one sign.  
Nor can imagination throw  
The penetrative shaft: we pass  
The breath of thought, who would divine  
If haply they may grow  
As Earth; have our desire to know;  
If life comes there to grain from grass,  
And flowers like ours of toil and pain;  
Has passion to beat bar,  
Win space from cleaving brain;  
The mystic link attain,  
Whereby star holds on star.

Those visible immortals beam  
Allurement to the dream:  
Ireful at human hungers brook  
No question in the look.  
For ever virgin to our sense,  
Remote they wane to gaze intense:  
Prolong it, and in ruthlessness they smite  
The beating heart behind the ball of sight:  
Till we conceive their heavens hoar,  
Those lights they raise but sparkles frore,  
And Earth, our blood-warm Earth, a shud-  
dering prey  
To that frigidity of brainless ray.

Yet space is given for breath of thought  
 Beyond our bounds when musing: more  
 When to that musing love is brought,  
 And' love is asked of love's wherefore.  
 'T is Earth's, her gift; else have we nought:  
 Her gift, her secret, here our tie.  
 And not with her and yonder sky?  
 Bethink you: were it Earth alone  
 Breeds love, would not her region be  
 The sole delight and throne  
 Of generous Deity?

To deeper than this ball of sight  
 Appeal the lustrous people of the night.  
 Fronting yon shoreless, sown with fiery  
 sails,

It is our ravenous that quails,  
 Flesh by its craven thirsts and fears dis-  
 traught.

The spirit leaps alight,  
 Doubts not in them is he,  
 The binder of his sheaves, the same, the  
 right:  
 Of magnitude to magnitude is wrought,  
 To feel it large of the great life they hold:  
 In them to come, or vaster interwolved,  
 The issues known in us, our unsolved  
 solved:  
 That there with toil Life climbs the self-  
 same Tree,  
 Whose roots enrichment have from ripe-  
 ness dropped.

So may we read and little find them cold:  
 Let it but be the lord of Mind to guide  
 Our eyes; no branch of Reason's growing  
 lopped;

Nor dreaming on a dream; but fortified  
 By day to penetrate black midnight; see,  
 Hear, feel, outside the senses; even that we,  
 The specks of dust upon a mound of mould,  
 We who reflect those rays, though low our  
 place,

To them are lastingly allied.

So may we read, and little find them cold:  
 Not frosty lamps illumining dead space,  
 Not distant aliens, not senseless Powers.  
 The fire is in them whereof we are born;  
 The music of their motion may be ours.  
 Spirit shall deem them beckoning Earth and  
 voiced

Sisterly to her, in her beams rejoiced.  
 Of love, the grand impulsion, we behold  
 The love that lends her grace

Among the starry fold.

Then at new flood of customary morn,  
 Look at her through her showers,  
 Her mists, her streaming gold,  
 A wonder edges the familiar face:  
 She wears no more that robe of printed  
 hours;  
 Half strange seems Earth, and sweeter than  
 her flowers.

# COVENTRY PATMORE

[1823-1896]

## SELECTIONS FROM THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

[1854-56.]

### THE IMPOSSIBILITY

Lo, Love's obey'd by all. 'Tis right  
That all should know what they obey,  
Lest erring conscience damp delight,  
And folly laugh our joys away.  
Thou Primal Love, who grantest wings  
And voices to the woodland birds,  
Grant me the power of saying things  
Too simple and too sweet for words!

### LOVE'S REALITY

I WALK, I trust, with open eyes;  
I've travell'd half my worldly course;  
And in the way behind me lies  
Much vanity and some remorse;  
I've lived to feel how pride may part  
Spirits, tho' match'd like hand and glove;  
I've blushed for love's abode, the heart;  
But have not disbelieved in love;  
Nor unto love, sole mortal thing  
Of worth immortal, done the wrong  
To count it, with the rest that sing,  
Unworthy of a serious song;  
And love is my reward: for now,  
When most of dead'nning time complain,  
The myrtle blooms upon my brow,  
Its odour quickens all my brain.

### THE LOVER

HE meets, by heavenly chance express,  
The destined maid; some hidden hand  
Unveils to him that loveliness  
Which others cannot understand.  
His merits in her presence grow,  
To match the promise in her eyes,  
And round her happy footsteps blow  
The authentic airs of Paradise.  
For joy of her he cannot sleep;  
Her beauty haunts him all the night;  
It melts his heart, it makes him weep  
For wonder, worship, and delight.  
O, paradox of love, he longs,  
Most humble when he most aspires,  
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs  
From her he honours and desires.  
Her graces make him rich, and ask  
No guerdon; this imperial style  
Affronts him; he despairs to bask,  
The pensioner of her priceless smile.

He prays for some hard thing to do,  
Some work of fame and labour immense,  
To stretch the languid bulk and thw  
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.  
No smallest boon were bought too dear,  
Though barter'd for his love-sick life;  
Yet trusts he, with undoubted cheer,  
To vanquish heaven, and call her Wife.  
He notes how queens of sweetness still  
Neglect their crowns, and stoop to mate;  
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,  
They ask but love proportionate;  
How swift pursuit by small degrees,  
Love's tactic, works like miracle;  
How valour, clothed in courtesies,  
Brings down the haughtiest citadel;  
And therefore, though he merits not  
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,  
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,  
Out-soars all possible desert.

### LOVE A VIRTUE

STRONG passions mean weak will, and he  
Who truly knows the strength and bliss  
Which are in love, will own with me  
No passion but a virtue 'tis.  
Few hear my word; it soars above  
The subtlest senses of the swarm  
Of wretched things which know not love,  
Their Psyche still a wingless worm.  
Ice-cold seems heaven's noble glow  
To spirits whose vital heat is hell;  
And to corrupt hearts even so  
The songs I sing, the tale I tell.  
These cannot see the robes of white  
In which I sing of love. Alack,  
But darkness shows in heavenly light,  
Though whiteness, in the dark, is black!

### THE ROSE OF THE WORLD

LO, WHEN the Lord made North and South  
And sun and moon ordainèd, He,  
Forthbringing each by word of mouth  
In order of its dignity,  
Did man from the crude clay express  
By sequence, and, all else decreed,  
He formed the woman; nor might less  
Than Sabbath such a work succeed.  
And still with favour singled out,  
Marred less than man by mortal fall,  
Her disposition is devout,  
Her countenance angelical;

The best things that the best believe  
 Are in her face so kindly writ  
 The faithless, seeing her, conceive  
 Not only heaven, but hope of it;  
 No idle thought her instinct shrouds,  
 But fancy chequers settled sense,  
 Like alteration of the clouds  
 On noonday's azure permanence;  
 Pure dignity, composure, ease  
 Declare affections nobly fix'd,  
 And impulse sprung from due degrees  
 Of sense and spirit sweetly mix'd.  
 Her modesty, her chieftest grace,  
 The cestus clasping Venus' side,  
 How potent to deject the face  
 Of him who would affront its pride!  
 Wrong dares not in her presence speak,  
 Nor spotted thought its taint disclose  
 Under the protest of a cheek  
 Outbragging Nature's boast the rose.  
 In mind and manners how discreet;  
 How artless in her very art;  
 How candid in discourse; how sweet  
 The concord of her lips and heart;  
 How simple and how circumspect;  
 How subtle and how fancy-free;  
 Though sacred to her love, how deck'd  
 With unexclusive courtesy;  
 How quick in talk to see from far  
 The way to vanquish or evade;  
 How able her persuasions are  
 To prove, her reasons to persuade;  
 How (not to call true instinct's bent  
 And woman's very nature, harm),  
 How amiable and innocent  
 Her pleasure in her power to charm;  
 How humbly careful to attract.  
 Though crown'd with all the soul de-  
 sires,  
 Connubial aptitude exact,  
 Diversity that never tires.

## THE DEAN

## I

THE Ladies rose. I held the door,  
 And sigh'd, as her departing grace  
 Assured me that she always wore  
 A heart as happy as her face;  
 And, jealous of the winds that blew,  
 I dreaded, o'er the tasteless wine,  
 What fortune momentily might do  
 To hurt the hope that she'd be mine.

## II

Towards my mark the Dean's talk set:  
 He praised my 'Notes on Abury,'  
 Read when the Association met  
 At Sarum; he was pleased to see  
 I had not stopp'd, as some men had,  
 At Wrangler and Prize Poet; last,  
 He hoped the business was not bad  
 I came about: then the wine pass'd.

## III

A full glass prefaced my reply:  
 I loved his daughter, Honor; I told  
 My estate and prospects; might I try  
 To win her? At my words so bold  
 My sick heart sank. Then he: He gave  
 His glad consent, if I could get  
 Her love. A dear, good Girl! she'd have  
 Only three thousand pounds as yet;  
 More bye and bye. Yes, his good will  
 Should go with me; he would not stir;  
 He and my father in old time still  
 Wish'd I should some day marry her;  
 But God so seldom lets us take  
 Our chosen pathway, when it lies  
 In steps that either mar or make  
 Or alter others' destinies,  
 That, though his blessing and his pray'r  
 Had help'd, should help, my suit, yet he  
 Left all to me, his passive share  
 Consent and opportunity.  
 My chance, he hoped, was good: I'd won  
 Some name already; friends and place  
 Appear'd within my reach, but none  
 Her mind and manners would not grace.  
 Girls love to see the men in whom  
 They invest their vanities admired;  
 Besides, where goodness is, there room  
 For good to work will be desired.  
 'Twas so with one now pass'd away;  
 And what she was at twenty-two,  
 Honor was now; and he might say  
 Mine was a choice I could not rue.

## IV

He ceased, and gave his hand. He had won  
 (And all my heart was in my word),  
 From me the affection of a son,  
 Whichever fortune Heaven conferr'd!  
 Well, well, would I take more wine? Then  
 go  
 To her; she makes tea on the lawn  
 These fine warm afternoons. And so  
 We went whither my soul was drawn;  
 And her light-hearted ignorance  
 Of interest in our discourse  
 Fill'd me with love, and seem'd to enhance  
 Her beauty with pathetic force,  
 As, through the flowery mazes sweet,  
 Fronting the wind that flutter'd blythe,  
 And loved her shape, and kiss'd her feet,  
 Shown to their insteps proud and lithe,  
 She approach'd, all mildness and young  
 trust,  
 And ever her chaste and noble air  
 Gave to love's feast its choicest gust,  
 A vague, faint augury of despair.

## LOVE'S IMMORTALITY

How VILELY 'twere to misdeserve  
 The poet's gift of perfect speech,  
 In song to try, with trembling nerve,  
 The limit of its utmost reach,

Only to sound the wretched praise  
Of what tomorrow shall not be;  
So mocking with immortal bays  
The cross-bones of mortality!  
I do not thus. My faith is fast  
That all the loveliness I sing  
Is made to bear the mortal blast,  
And blossom in a better Spring.  
Doubts of eternity ne'er cross  
The Lover's mind, divinely clear:  
*For ever* is the gain or loss  
Which maddens him with hope or fear:  
So trifles serve for his relief,  
And trifles make him sick and pale;  
And yet his pleasure and his grief  
Are both on a majestic scale.  
The chance, indefinitely small,  
Of issue infinitely great,  
Eclipses finite interests all,  
And has the dignity of fate.

## LIFE OF LIFE

WHAT'S that, which, ere I spake, was gone:  
So joyful and intense a spark  
That, whilst o'erhead the wonder shone,  
The day, before but dull, grew dark?  
I do not know; but this I know,  
That, had the splendour lived a year,  
The truth that I some heavenly show  
Did see, could not be now more clear.  
This know I too: might mortal breath  
Express the passion then inspired,  
Evil would die a natural death,  
And nothing transient be desired;  
And error from the soul would pass,  
And leave the senses pure and strong  
As sunbeams. But the best, alas,  
Has neither memory nor tongue!

## THE REVELATION

AN idle poet, here and there,  
Looks round him; but, for all the rest,  
The world, unfathomably fair,  
Is duller than a witling's jest.  
Love wakes men, once a lifetime each;  
They lift their heavy lids, and look;  
And, lo, what one sweet page can teach,  
They read with joy, then shut the book.  
And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,  
And most forget; but, either way,  
That and the Child's unheeded dream  
Is all the light of all their day.

## THE SPIRIT'S EPOCHS

Nor in the crisis of events,  
Of compass'd hopes, or fears fulfil'd,  
Or acts of gravest consequence,  
Are life's delight and depth reveal'd.  
The day of days was not the day;  
That went before, or was postponed;  
The night Death took our lamp away  
Was not the night on which we groan'd.

I drew my bride, beneath the moon,  
Across my threshold; happy hour!  
But, ah, the walk that afternoon  
We saw the water-flags in flower!

## GOING TO CHURCH

(4)

THENCEFORTH, and through that pray'r, I  
trod  
A path with no suspicions dim,  
I loved her in the name of God,  
And for the ray she was of Him;  
I ought to admire much more, not less;  
Her beauty was a godly grace;  
The mystery of loveliness,  
Which made an altar of her face,  
Was not of the flesh, though that was fair,  
But a most pure and living light  
Without a name, by which the rare  
And virtuous spirit flamed to sight.  
If oft, in love, effect lack'd cause  
And cause effect, 'twere vain to soar  
Reasons to seek for that which was  
Reason itself, or something more.  
My joy was no idolatry  
Upon the ends of the vile earth bent,  
For when I loved her most then I  
Most yearn'd for more divine content.  
That other doubt, which, like a ghost,  
In the brain's darkness haunted me,  
Was thus resolved; Him loved I most,  
But her I loved most sensibly.  
Lastly, my giddiest hope allow'd  
No selfish thought, or earthly smirch;  
And forth I went, in peace, and proud  
To take my passion into Church;  
Grateful and glad to think that all  
Such doubts would seem entirely vain  
To her whose nature's lighter fall  
Made no divorce of heart from brain.

## THE ABDICATION

(4)

TWICE rose, twice died my trembling word;  
The faint and frail Cathedral chimes  
Spake time in music, and we heard  
The chafers rustling in the limes.  
Her dress, that touch'd me where I stood,  
The warmth of her confidé arm,  
Her bosom's gentle neighbourhood,  
Her pleasure in her power to charm,  
Her look, her love, her form, her touch,  
The least seem'd most by blissful turn,  
Blissful but that it pleased too much,  
And taught the wayward soul to yearn.  
It was as if a harp with wires  
Was traversed by the breath I drew;  
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,  
She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

## LOVE'S PERVERSITY

How STRANGE a thing a lover seems  
 To animals that do not love!  
 Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,  
 And flouts us with his Lady's glove;  
 How foreign is the garb he wears;  
 And how his great devotion mocks  
 Our poor propriety, and scares  
 The undevout with paradox?  
 His soul, through scorn of worldly care,  
 And great extremes of sweet and gall,  
 And musing much on all that's fair,  
 Grows witty and fantastical;  
 He sobs his joy and sings his grief,  
 And evermore finds such delight  
 In simply picturing his relief.  
 That 'plaining seems to cure his plight;  
 He makes his sorrow, when there's none;  
 His fancy blows both cold and hot;  
 Next to the wish that she'll be won,  
 His first hope is that she may not;  
 He sues, yet deprecates consent;  
 Would she be captured she must fly;  
 She looks too happy and content,  
 For whose least pleasure he would die.  
 Oh, cruelty, she cannot care  
 For one to whom she's always kind!  
 He says he's nought, but, oh, despair,  
 If he's not Jove to her fond mind!  
 He's jealous if she pets a dove,  
 She must be his with all her soul;  
 Yet 'tis a postulate in love  
 That part is greater than the whole;  
 And all his apprehension's stress,  
 When he's with her, regards her hair,  
 Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,  
 As if his life were only there;  
 Because she's constant, he will change,  
 And kindest glances coldly meet,  
 And, all the time he seems so strange,  
 His soul is fawning at her feet;  
 Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired,  
 He wickedly provokes her tears,  
 And when she weeps, as he desired,  
 Falls slain with ecstasies of fears;  
 He blames her, though she has no fault,  
 Except the folly to be his;  
 He worships her, the more to exalt  
 The profanation of a kiss;  
 Health's his disease; he's never well  
 But when his paleness shames her rose;  
 His faith's a rock-built citadel,  
 Its sign a flag that each way blows;  
 His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes;  
 And Love, in him, is fierce, like Hate,  
 And ruffles his ambrosial plumes  
 Against the bars of time and fate.

## THE FOREIGN LAND

A WOMAN is a foreign land,  
 Of which, though there he settled young,  
 A man will ne'er quite understand  
 The customs, politics, and tongue.

The foolish hie them post-haste through,  
 See fashions odd, and prospects fair,  
 Learn of the language, 'How d'ye do,'  
 And go and brag they have been there.  
 The most for leave to trade apply,  
 For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,  
 Then get what knowledge ear and eye  
 Glean chancewise in the life-long mart.  
 And certain others, few and fit,  
 Attach them to the Court, and see  
 The Country's best, its accent hit,  
 And partly sound its polity.

## THE MARRIED LOVER

WHY, having won her, do I woo?  
 Because her spirit's vestal grace  
 Provokes me always to pursue,  
 But, spirit-like, eludes embrace;  
 Because her womanhood is such  
 That, as on court-days subjects kiss  
 The Queen's hand, yet so near a touch  
 Affirms no mean familiarness,  
 Nay, rather marks more fair the height  
 Which can with safety so neglect  
 To dread, as lower ladies might,  
 That grace could meet with disrespect;  
 Thus she with happy favour feeds  
 Allegiance from a love so high  
 That thence no false conceit proceeds  
 Of difference bridged, or state put by;  
 Because, although in act and word  
 As lowly as a wife can be,  
 Her manners, when they call me lord,  
 Remind me 'tis by courtesy;  
 Not with her least consent of will,  
 Which would my proud affection hurt,  
 But by the noble style that still  
 Imputes an unattain'd desert;  
 Because her gay and lofty brows,  
 When all is won which hope can ask,  
 Reflect a light of hopeless snows  
 That bright in virgin ether bask;  
 Because, though free of the outer court  
 I am, this Temple keeps its shrine  
 Sacred to Heaven; because, in short,  
 She's not and never can be mine.

## SELECTIONS FROM THE UNKNOWN EROS

[1877.]

## DEPARTURE

It was not like your great and gracious ways!  
 Do you, that have nought other to lament,  
 Never, my Love, repent  
 Of how, that July afternoon,  
 You went,  
 With sudden, unintelligible phrase,  
 And frighten'd eye,  
 Upon your journey of so many days,  
 Without a single kiss or a good-bye?

I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;  
 And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,  
 You whispering to me, for your voice  
     was weak,  
 Your harrowing praise.  
 Well, it was well, my Wife,  
 To hear you such things speak,  
 And see your love  
 Make of your eyes a growing gloom of life,  
 As a warm South-wind sombres a March  
     grove.  
 And it was like your great and gracious  
     ways  
 To turn your talk on daily things, my  
     Dear,  
 Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash  
 To let the laughter flash,  
 Whilst I drew near,  
 Because you spoke so low that I could  
     scarcely hear.  
 But all at once to leave me at the last,  
 More at the wonder than the loss aghast,  
 With huddled, unintelligible phrase,  
 And frighten'd eye,  
 And go your journey of all days  
 With not one kiss or a good-bye,  
 And the only loveless look the look with  
     which you pass'd,  
 'Twas all unlike your great and gracious  
     ways.

## THE TOYS

*beloved father*  
*beloved son*

My little Son, who look'd from thoughtful  
     eyes,  
 And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up  
     wise,  
 Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,  
 I struck him, and dismiss'd  
 With hard words and unkiss'd,  
 His Mother, who was patient, being dead.  
 Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder  
     sleep,  
 I visited his bed,  
 But found him slumbering deep,  
 With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet  
 From his late sobbing wet.  
 And I, with moan,  
 Kissing away his tears, left others of my  
     own;  
 For, on a table drawn' beside his head,  
 He had put, within his reach,  
 A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,  
 A piece of glass abraded by the beach  
 And six or seyen shells,  
 A bottle with bluebells  
 And two French copper coins, ranged there  
     with careful art,  
 To comfort his sad heart.  
 So when that night I pray'd  
 To God, I wept, and said:  
 Ah, when at last we lie with strangled  
     breath,  
 Not vexing Thee in death,

And Thou rememberest of what toys  
 We made our joys,  
 How weakly understood,  
 Thy great commanded good,  
 Then, fatherly not less  
 Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the  
     clay,  
 Thou'l leave Thy wrath, and say,  
 "I will be sorry for their childishness."

## SPONSA DEI

WHAT is this Maiden fair  
 The laughing of whose eye  
 Is in man's heart renew'd virginity;  
 Who yet sick longing breeds  
 For marriage which exceeds  
 The inventive guess of Love to satisfy  
 With hope of utter binding, and of loosing  
     endless dear despair?  
 What gleams about her shine,  
 More transient than delight and more di-  
     vine!  
 If she does something but a little sweet,  
 As gaze towards the glass to set her hair,  
 See how his soul falls humbled at her  
     feet!  
 Her gentle step, to go or come,  
 Gains her more merit than a martyrdom;  
 And, if she dance, it doth such grace confer  
 As opes the heaven of heavens to more  
     than her,  
 And makes a rival of her worshipper.  
 To die unknown for her were little cost!  
 So is she without guile,  
 Her mere refused smile  
 Makes up the sum of that which may be  
     lost!  
 Who is this Fair  
 Whom each hath seen,  
 The darkest once in this bewailed dell,  
 Be he not destin'd for the glooms of hell?  
 Whom each hath seen  
 And known, with sharp remorse and sweet,  
     as Queen  
 And tear-glad Mistress of his hopes of  
     bliss,  
 Too fair for man to kiss?  
 Who is this only happy She,  
 Whom, by a frantic flight of courtesy,  
 Born of despair  
 Of better lodging for his Spirit fair,  
 He adores as Margaret, Maude, or Cecily?  
 And what this sigh,  
 That each one heaves for earth's last  
     lowliehead  
 And the Heaven high  
 Ineffably lock'd in dateless bridal-bed?  
 Are all, then, mad, or is it prophecy?  
 "Sons now we are of God," as we have  
     heard,  
 "But what we shall be hath not yet ap-  
     peard."

O, Heart, remember thee  
 That man is none,  
 Save One.  
 What if this Lady be thy Soul, and He  
 Who claims to enjoy her sacred beauty  
 be,  
 Not thou, but God; and thy sick fire  
 A female vanity,  
 Such as a Bride, viewing her mirror'd  
 charms,  
 Feels when she sighs, "All these are for his  
 arms!"  
 A reflex heat  
 Flash'd on thy cheek from His immense  
 desire,  
 Which waits to crown, beyond thy brain's  
 conceit,  
 Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing  
 sweet,  
 Not bye-and-bye, but now,  
 Unless deny Him thou!

## THE AZALEA

THERE, where the sun shines first  
 Against our room,  
 She train'd the gold Azalea, whose per-  
 fume  
 She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace  
 dispersed.  
 Last night the delicate crests of saffron  
 bloom,

For that their dainty likeness watch'd and  
 nurst,  
 Were just at point to burst.  
 At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was  
 dead,  
 And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,  
 And waked, ah, God, and did not waken  
 her,  
 But lay, with eyes still closed,  
 Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere  
 By which I knew so well that she was  
 near,  
 My heart to speechless thankfulness com-  
 posed.  
 Till 'gan to stir  
 A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head—  
 It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was*  
 dead!  
 The warm night had the lingering buds dis-  
 closed;  
 And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast  
 A chance-found letter press'd  
 In which she said,  
 "So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu!  
 "Parting's well-paid with soon again to  
 meet,  
 "Soon in your arms to feel so small and  
 sweet,  
 "Sweet to myself than am so sweet to  
 you!"

# ROBERT BRIDGES

[1844—]

## FROM THE GROWTH OF LOVE

[1876. Enlarged 1889.]

### VIII

For beauty being the best of all we know  
Sums up the unsearchable and secret aims  
Of nature, and on joys whose earthly names  
Were never told can form and sense bestow ;  
And man has sped his instinct to outgo  
The step of science; and against her shames  
Imagination stakes out heavenly claims,  
Building a tower above the head of woe.

Nor is there fairer work for beauty found  
Than that she win in nature her release  
From all the woes that in the world  
abound :

Nay with his sorrow may his love increase,  
If from man's greater need beauty redound,  
And claims his tears for homage of his  
peace.

### xvi

This world is unto God a work of art,  
Of which the unaccomplish'd heavenly plan  
Is hid in life within the creature's heart,  
And for perfection looketh unto man.

Ah me! those thousand ages: with what  
slow

Pains and persistence were his idols made,  
Destroy'd and made, ere ever he could know  
The mighty mother must be so obey'd.

For lack of knowledge and thro' little  
skill

His childish mimicry outwent his aim;  
His effort shaped the genius of his will;  
Till thro' distinction and revolt he came,  
True to his simple terms of good and ill,  
Seeking the face of Beauty without blame.

### xx

The world still goeth about to shew and  
hide,

Befool'd of all opinion, fond of fame:  
But he that can do well taketh no pride,  
And see'th his error, undisturb'd by shame :  
So poor's the best that longest life can  
do,

The most so little, diligently done;  
So mighty is the beauty that doth woo,  
So vast the joy that love from love hath  
won.

God's love to win is easy, for He loveth  
Desire's fair attitude, nor strictly weighs  
The broken thing, but all alike approveth  
Which love hath aim'd at Him: that is  
heaven's praise:

And if we look for any praise on earth,  
'Tis in man's love: all else is nothing worth.

### xxiii

O weary pilgrims, chanting of your woe,  
That turn your eyes to all the peaks that  
shine,  
Hailing in each the citadel divine  
The which ye thought to have enter'd long  
ago;  
Until at length your feeble steps and slow  
Falter upon the threshold of the shrine,  
And your hearts overburden'd doubt in fine  
Whether it be Jerusalem or no:

Dishearten'd pilgrims, I am one of you:  
For, having worshipp'd many a barren face,  
I scarce now greet the goal I journey'd to:  
I stand a pagan in the holy place;  
Beneath the lamp of truth I am found un-  
true,  
And question with the God that I embrace.

### xxxv

All earthly beauty hath one cause and  
proof,  
To lead the pilgrim soul to beauty above:  
Yet lieth the greater bliss so far aloof,  
That few there be are wean'd from earthly  
love.

Joy's ladder it is, reaching from home  
to home,  
The best of all the work that all was good;  
Whereof 'twas writ the angels aye up-  
climb,  
Down sped, and at the top the Lord God  
stood.

But I my time abuse, my eyes by day  
Center'd on thee, by night my heart on  
fire —

Letting my number'd moments run away —  
Nor e'en 'twixt night and day to heaven  
aspire:

So true it is that what the eye seeth  
not  
But slow is loved, and loved is soon for-  
got.

## XLII

When I see childhood on the threshold  
seize  
The prize of life from age and likeli-  
hood,  
I mourn time's change that will not be  
withstood,  
Thinking how Christ said *Be like one of  
these.*  
For in the forest among many trees  
Scarce one in all is found that hath made  
good  
The virgin pattern of its slender wood;  
That courtesied in joy to every breeze;

But scath'd, but knotted trunks that raise  
on high  
Their arms in stiff contortion, strain'd and  
bare;  
Whose patriarchal crowns in sorrow sigh.  
So, little children, ye—nay nay, ye ne'er  
From me shall learn how sure the change  
and nigh,  
When ye shall share our strength and  
mourn to share.

## LXII

I will be what God made me, nor protest  
Against the bent of genius in my time,  
That science of my friends robs all the  
best.  
While I love beauty, and was born to  
rhyme.  
Be they our mighty men, and let me  
dwell  
In shadow among the mighty shades of  
old,  
With love's forsaken palace for my cell:  
Whence I look forth and all the world  
behold,

And say, These better days, in best  
things worse,  
This bastardy of time's magnificence,  
Will mend in fashion and throw off the  
curse,  
To crown new love with higher excellence.  
Curs'd tho' I be to live my life alone,  
My toil is for man's joy, his joy my  
own.

## FROM SHORTER POEMS

[1890-1894.]

## ELEGY

THE wood is bare: a river-mist is steeping  
The trees that winter's chill of life  
bereaves:  
Only their stiffened boughs break si'ence,  
weeping  
Over their fallen leaves;

That lie upon the dank earth brown and  
rotten,  
Miry and matted in the soaking wet:  
Forgotten with the spring, that is for-  
gotten  
By them that can forget.  
Yet it was here we walked when ferns  
were springing,  
And through the mossy bank shot bud  
and blade:—  
Here found in summer, when the birds  
were singing,  
A green and pleasant shade.

'Twas here we loved in sunnier days and  
greener;  
And now, in this disconsolate decay,  
I come to see her where I most have  
seen her,  
And touch the happier day.

For on this path, at every turn and corner,  
The fancy of her figure on me falls:  
Yet walks she with the slow step of a  
mourner,  
Nor hears my voice that calls.

So through my heart there winds a track  
of feeling,  
A path of memory, that is all her own:  
Whereto her phantom beauty ever stealing  
Haunts the sad spot alone.

About her steps the trunks are bare, the  
branches  
Drip heavy tears upon her downcast  
head;  
And bleed from unseen wounds that no  
sun staunches,  
For the year's sun is dead.

And dead leaves wrap the fruits that sum-  
mer planted:  
And birds that love the South have taken  
wing.  
The wanderer, loitering o'er the scene  
enchanted,  
Weeps, and despairs of spring.

## POOR WITHERED ROSE AND DRY

Poor withered rose and dry,  
Skeleton of a rose,  
Risen to testify  
To love's sad close:

Treasured for love's sweet sake,  
That of joy past  
Thou might'st again awake  
Memory at last.

Yet in thy perfume sweet;  
Thy petals red  
Yet tell of summer heat,  
And the gay bed;

Yet, yet recall the glow  
Of the gazing sun,  
When at thy bush we two  
Joined hands in one.

But, rose, thou hast not seen,  
Thou hast not wept  
The change that passed between,  
Whilst thou hast slept.

To me thou seemest yet  
The dead dream's thrall:  
While I live and forget  
Dream, truth and all.

Thou are more fresh than I,  
Rose, sweet and red:  
Salt on my pale cheeks lie  
The tears I shed.

#### A POPPY GROWS UPON THE SHORE

A POPPY grows upon the shore,  
Bursts her twin cup in summer late:  
Her leaves are glaucous-green and hoar,  
Her petals yellow, delicate.

Oft to her cousins turns her thought,  
In wonder if they care that she  
Is fed with spray for dew, and caught  
By every gale that sweeps the sea.

She has no lovers like the red,  
That dances with the noble corn:  
Her blossoms on the waves are shed,  
Where she stands shivering and forlorn.

#### RONDEAU

His poisoned shafts, that fresh he dips  
In juice of plants that no bee sips,  
He takes, and with his bow renown'd  
Goes out upon his hunting ground,  
Hanging his quiver at his hips.

He draws them one by one, and clips  
Their heads between his finger-tips,  
And looses with a twanging sound  
His poisoned shafts.

But if a maiden with her lips  
Suck from the wound the blood that drips,  
And drink the poison from the wound,  
The simple remedy is found  
That of their deadly terror strips  
His poisoned shafts.

#### TRIOLET

WHEN first we met we did not guess  
That Love would prove so hard a master;  
Of more than common friendliness  
When first we met we did not guess.  
Who could foretell this sore distress  
This irretrievable disaster  
When first we met? — We did not guess  
That Love would prove so hard a master.

#### TRIOLET

ALL women born are so perverse  
No man need boast their love possessing.  
If nought seem better, nothing's worse:  
All women born are so perverse.  
From Adam's wife, that proved a curse  
Though God had made her for a blessing.  
All women born are so perverse  
No man need boast their love possessing.

#### A PASSER-BY

WHITHER, O splendid ship, thy white sails  
crowding,  
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent  
West,  
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,  
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy  
quest?  
Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales  
opprest,  
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is  
hurling,  
Wilt thou glide on the blue Pacific, or  
rest  
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails  
furling.

I there before thee, in the country that well  
thou knowest,  
Already arrived am inhaling the odorous  
air:  
I watch thee enter unerringly where thou  
goest,  
And anchor queen of the strange ship-  
ping there,  
Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts  
bare;  
Nor is aught from the foaming reef to  
the snow-capped, grandest  
Peak, that is over the feathery palms  
more fair  
Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still  
thou standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhailed and  
nameless,  
I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly  
divine  
That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage  
blameless,  
Thy port assured in a happier land than  
mine.  
But for all I have given thee, beauty  
enough is thine,  
As thou, aslant with trim tackle and  
shrouding,  
From the proud nostril curve of a prow's  
line  
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white  
sails crowding.

## DEJECTION

WHEREFORE to-night so full of care,  
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,  
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare  
Painful escapes of fitful life?

Shaping the doom that may befall  
By precedent of terror past:  
By love dishonoured, and the call  
Of friendship slighted at the last?

By treasured names, the little store  
That memory out of wreck could save  
Of loving hearts, that gone before  
Call their old comrade to the grave?

O soul, be patient: thou shalt find  
A little matter mend all this;  
Some strain of music to thy mind,  
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow  
Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste  
Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow  
Half sad for sweetness run to waste.

O happy life! I hear thee sing,  
O rare delight of mortal stuff!  
I praise my days for all they bring,  
Yet are they only not enough.

## I HAVE LOVED FLOWERS THAT FADE

I HAVE loved flowers that fade,  
Within those magic tents  
Rich hues have marriage made  
With sweet unmemedored scents:  
A honeymoon delight,—  
A joy of love at sight,  
That ages in an hour:—  
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs, that die  
Before their charm is writ  
Along a liquid sky  
Trembling to welcome it.  
Notes, that with pulse of fire  
Proclaim the spirit's desire,  
Then die, and are nowhere:—  
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,  
And wither as a bloom:  
Fear not a flowery death,  
Dread not an airy tomb!  
Fly with delight, fly hence!  
'Twas thine love's tender sense  
To feast; now on thy bier  
Beauty shall shed a tear.

## LONDON SNOW

WHEN men were all asleep the snow came flying,  
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,  
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,  
Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;  
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;  
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:  
Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;  
Hiding difference, making unevenness even, into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven  
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,  
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;  
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness  
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:  
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;  
The ear harkened to the stillness of the solemn air;  
No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,  
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,  
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze  
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;  
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;  
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,  
'O look at the trees!' they cried, 'O look at the trees!'  
With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,  
Following along the white deserted way,  
A country company long dispersed asunder:  
When now already the sun, in pale display  
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below  
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.  
For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;

And trains of sombre men, past tale of  
number,  
Tread along brown paths, as toward their  
toil they go:  
But even for them awhile no cares en-  
cumber  
Their minds diverted; the daily word is  
unspoken,  
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow  
slumber  
At the sight of the beauty that greets them,  
for the charm they have broken.

## I LOVE ALL BEAUTEOUS THINGS

I LOVE all beauteous things,  
I seek and adore them;  
God hath no better praise,  
And man in his hasty days  
Is honoured for them.

I too will something make  
And joy in the making;  
Altho' to-morrow it seem  
Like the empty words of a dream  
Remembered on waking.

FROM NEW POEMS AND  
LATER POEMS

## MY DELIGHT AND THY DELIGHT

My delight and thy delight  
Walking, like two angels white,  
In the gardens of the night:

My desire and thy desire  
Twining to a tongue of fire,  
Leaping live, and laughing higher;  
Thro' the everlasting strife  
In the mystery of life.

Love, from whom the world begun,  
Hath the secret of the sun.

Love can tell, and love alone,  
Whence the million stars were strewn,  
Why each atom knows its own,  
How, in spite of woe and death,  
Gay is life, and sweet is breath:

This he taught us, this we knew,  
Happy in his science true,  
Hand in hand as we stood

Neath the shadows of the wood,  
Heart to heart as we lay  
In the dawning of the day.

## PATER FILIO

SENSE with keenest edge unusèd,  
Yet unsteel'd by scathing fire;  
Lovely feet as yet unbruised  
On the ways of dark desire;  
Sweetest hope that lookest smiling  
O'er the wilderness defiling!

Why such beauty, to be blighted  
By the swarm of foul destruction?  
Why such innocence delighted,  
When sin stalks to thy seduction?  
All the litanies e'er chaunted  
Shall not keep thy faith undaunted.

I have pray'd the sainted Morning  
To unclasp her hands to hold thee;  
From resignful Eve's adorning  
Stol'n a robe of peace to enfold thee;  
With all charms of man's contriving  
Arm'd thee for thy lonely striving.

Me too once unthinking Nature,  
—Whence Love's timeless mockery took  
me,—  
Fashion'd so divine a creature,  
Yea, and like a beast forsook me.  
I forgave, but tell the measure  
Of her crime in thee, my treasure.

## MELANCHOLIA

THE sickness of desire, that in dark days  
Looks on the imagination of despair,  
Forgetteth man, and stinteth God his  
praise;  
Nor but in sleep findeth a cure for care.  
Incertainty that once gave scope to dream  
Of laughing enterprise and glory untold,  
Is now a blackness that no stars redeem,  
A wall of terror in a night of cold.

Fool! that thou hast impossibly desired  
And now impatiently despairest, see  
How nought is changed: Joy's wisdom is  
attired  
Splendid for others' eyes if not for thee:  
Not love or beauty or youth from earth  
is fled:  
If they delite thee not, 'tis thou art dead.

# WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

[1840-1922]

## FROM THE LOVE SONNETS OF PROTEUS

[1875.]

### II. COMPARING HER TO A FALCON

BRAVE as a falcon and as merciless,  
With bright eyes watching still the world,  
thy prey,  
I saw thee pass in thy lone majesty,  
Untamed, unmated, high above the press.  
The dull crowd gazed at thee. It could  
not guess  
The secret of thy proud aerial way,  
Or read in thy mute face the soul which lay  
A prisoner there in chains of tenderness.  
—Lo, thou art captured. In my hand to-  
day

I hold thee, and awhile thou deignest to be  
Pleased with my jesses. I would fain be-  
guile  
My foolish heart to think thou lovest me.  
See,  
I dare not love thee quite. A little while  
And thou shalt sail back heavenwards.  
Woe is me!

III. ON HIS FORTUNE IN LOVING HER  
I DID not choose thee, dearest. It was Love  
That made the choice, not I. Mine eyes  
were blind  
As a rude shepherd's who to some lone  
grove  
His offering brings, and cares not at what  
shrine  
He bends his knee. The gifts alone were  
mine;  
The rest was Love's. He took me by the  
hand,  
And fired the sacrifice, and poured the wine,  
And spoke the words I might not under-  
stand.

I was unwise in all but the dear chance  
Which was my fortune, and the blind desire  
Which led my foolish steps to Love's abode,  
And youth's sublime unreasoned prescience  
Which raised an altar and inscribed in fire  
Its dedication: "To the unknown god."

### IV. IN PRAISE OF HIS FATE

WHEN I hear others speak of this and that  
In our fools' lives which might have better  
gone,  
Complaining idly of too niggard fate  
And wishing still their senseless past un-  
done,

I feel a childish tremor through me run,  
Stronger than reason, lest by somé far  
chance  
Fate's ear to our sad plaints should yet  
be won  
And these our lives be thrown back on  
our hands.  
I tremble when I think of my past years,  
My hopes, my aims, my wishes. All these  
days  
I might have wandered far from Love  
and thee.  
But kind fate held me, heedless of my  
prayers,  
A prisoner to its wise mysterious ways,  
And forced me to thy feet—ah fortunate  
me!

### XI. ON HER LIGHTEARTEDNESS

I WOULD I had thy courage, dear, to face  
This bankruptcy of love, and greet despair  
With smiling eyes and unconcerned em-  
brace,  
And these few words of banter at "dull  
care".  
I would that I could sing and comb my  
hair  
Like thee the morning thro', and choose my  
dress,  
And gravely argue what I best should wear,  
A shade of ribbon or a fold of lace.  
I would I had thy courage and thy peace,  
Peace passing understanding; that mine  
eyes  
Could find forgetfulness like thine in sleep;  
That all the past for me like thee could  
cease  
And leave me cheerfully, sublimely wise,  
Like David with washed face who ceased  
to weep.

XXI. HIS BONDAGE TO MANON IS BROKEN  
From this day forth I lead another life,  
Another life! A life without a tear!  
To-day has ended the unequal strife:  
My service and my sorrow finish here.  
See, my soul cuts her cable of be'ief  
And sails towards the ocean. She shall  
steer  
Sublime henceforth o'er accidents of grief.  
I have loved too much, too loyally, too  
long.  
To-day I am a pirate of the sea.

Let others suffer. I have suffered wrong.  
Let others love, and love as tenderly.  
Oh, Manon, there are women yet unborn  
Shall rue thy frailty, else am I forsown.

XXXIII. REMINDING HER OF A PROMISE  
OH, Juliet, we have quarreled with our  
fate,  
And fate has struck us. Wherefore do we  
cry?

We prayed for liberty, and now too late  
Find liberty is this, to say "good-bye".  
The Winter which we loved not has gone  
by,

And Spring is come. The gardens, which  
were bare  
When we first wandered through them,  
you and I,  
The prisoners of our vain wishes, are  
Now full of golden flowers. The very lane  
Down to the sea is green. The cactus  
hedge

We saw cut down has sprouted new again,  
And swallows have their nests on the cliff's  
edge

Where we so often sat and dared complain  
Because our joy was new, and called it pain.

XXXIV. REMINDING HER OF A PROMISE  
(Continued)

YES, Spring is come, but joy alas is gone,—  
Gone ere we knew it, while our foolish  
eyes,  
Which should have watched its motions  
every one

Were looking elsewhere, at the hills, the  
skies,  
Chasing vain thoughts, as children butterflies,  
Until the hour struck and the day was  
done,

And we looked up in passionate surprise  
To find that clouds had blotted out our sun.  
Our joys are gone. And what is left to  
us,

Who loved not even love when it was  
here?

What but a voice which sobs monotonous  
As these sad waves upon the rocks, the  
dear

Fond voice which once made music with  
our own,  
And which our hearts now ache to think  
upon.

XXXIX. FAREWELL TO JULIET

JULIET, farewell. I would not be forgiven  
Even if I forgave. These words must be  
The last between us two in Earth or  
Heaven,  
The last and bitterest. You are hence-  
forth free

For ever from my bitter words and me.  
You shall not at my hand be further vexed  
With either love, reproach or jealousy  
(So help me Heaven), in this world or the  
next.

Our souls are single for all time to come  
And for eternity, and this farewell  
Is as the trumpet note, the crack of doom,  
Which heralds an eternal silence. Hell  
Has no more fixed and absolute decree.  
And Heaven and Hell may meet,—yet  
never we.

XLII. THE SAME CONTINUED

WE vex each other with our presence, I  
By my regrets and by my mocking face,  
You by your laughter and mad gaiety,  
And both by cruel thoughts of happier days.  
Is then the world so narrow that we pace  
These streets like prisoners still with eyes  
askance,

As bound together in the fell embrace  
Of a dark chain which bars deliverance?  
Nay, go your ways. I will not vex you  
more.

Make your own terms with life, while you  
are fair.

There is none better learned in woman's  
lore.

You yet may take revenge on grief and  
care,  
And 'twas your nature ever to be gay,  
Why should I scoff? Be merry while you  
may.

XLIII. THE SAME CONTINUED

I do not love you. To have said this once  
Had seemed to both of us a monstrous lie,  
An idle boast, love's last extravagance  
Or the mere paradox of vanity.  
Now it is true and yet more hideously  
More strangely monstrous. I, no less than  
you,  
Here own at length the worm which cannot  
die,

The burden of a pain for ever new.  
This is the "pang of loss," the bitterest  
Which Hell can give. We are shut out  
from Heaven

And never more shall look upon Love's  
face,

Being with those who perish unforgiven.  
Never to see Love's face! Ah, pain in pain,  
Which we do well to weep and weep again!

LIII. THE SAME CONTINUED

FAREWELL, then. It is finished. I forgo  
With this all right in you, even that of  
tears.

If I have spoken hardly, it will show  
How much I loved you. With you disap-  
pears

A glory, a romance of many years.  
What you may be henceforth I will not know.  
The phantom of your presence on my fears  
Is impotent at length for weal or woe.  
Your past, your present, all alike must fade  
In a new land of dreams where love is not.  
Then kiss me and farewell. The choice is made  
And we shall live to see the past forgot,  
If not forgiven. See, I came to curse,  
Yet stay to bless. I know not which is worse.

## LV. ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

To-DAY, all day, I rode upon the Down,  
With hounds and horsemen, a brave company.  
On this side in its glory lay the sea,  
On that the Sussex Weald, a sea of brown.  
The wind was light, and brightly the sun shone,  
And still we galloped on from gorse to gorse.  
And once, when checked, a thrush sang,  
And my horse Pricked his quick ears as to a sound unknown.  
I knew the Spring was come. I knew it even  
Better than all by this, that through my chase  
In bush and stone and hill and sea and heaven  
I seemed to see and follow still your face.  
Your face my quarry was. For it I rode,  
My horse a thing of wings, myself a god.

LVI. TO ONE WHOM HE DARED NOT LOVE  
As one who, in a desert wandering  
Alone and faint beneath a pitiless sky,  
And doubting in his heart if he shall bring  
His bones back to his kindred or there die,  
Finds at his feet a treasure suddenly  
Such as would make him for all time a king,  
And so forgets his fears and with keen eye  
Falls to a-counting each new precious thing:  
— So was I when you told me yesterday  
The tale of your dear love. Awhile I stood  
Astonished and enraptured, and my heart  
Began to count its treasures. Now dismay  
Steals back my joy, and terror chills my blood,  
And I remember only "We must part."

## LXI. TO ONE EXCUSING HIS POVERTY

AH! love, impute it not to me a sin  
That my poor soul thus beggared comes to thee.  
My soul a pilgrim was, in search of thine,

And met these accidents by land and sea.  
The world was hard, and took its usury,  
Its toll for each new night in each new inn;  
And every road had robber bands to fee;  
And all, even kindness, must be paid in coin.

Behold my scribe is empty, my heart bare.  
I give thee nothing who my all would give.  
My pilgrimage is finished, and I fare  
Bare to my death, unless with thee I live.  
Ah! give, love, and forgive that I am poor.  
Ah! take me to thy arms and ask no more.

## LXIX. SIBYLLINE BOOKS

WHEN first, a boy, at your fair knees I kneeled,  
'Twas with a worthy offering. In my hand  
My young life's book I held, a volume sealed,  
Which none but you, I deemed, might understand.  
And you I did entreat to loose the band  
And read therein your own soul's destiny.  
But, Tarquin-like, you turned from my demand,  
Too proudly fair to find your fate in me.  
When now I come, alas, what hands have turned  
Those virgin pages! Some are torn away,  
And some defaced; and some with passion burned,  
And some besmeared with life's least holy clay.  
Say, shall I offer you these pages wet  
With blood and tears? And will your sorrow read  
What your joy heeded not?—Unopened yet  
One page remains. It still may hold a fate,  
A counsel for the day of utter need.  
Nay, speak, sad heart, speak quick. The hour is late.  
Age threatens us. The Gaul is at the gate.

## LXXI. THE TWO HIGHWAYMEN

I LONG have had a quarrel set with Time,  
Because he robbed me. Every day of life  
Was wrested from me after bitter strife,  
I never yet could see the sun go down  
But I was angry in my heart, nor hear  
The leaves fall in the wind without a tear  
Over the dying summer. I have known  
No truce with Time nor Time's accomplice,  
Death.

The fair world is the witness of a crime  
Repeated every hour. For life and breath  
Are sweet to all who live; and bitterly  
The voices of these robbers of the heath  
Sound in each ear and chill the passer by.  
— What have we done to thee, thou monstrous Time?

What have we done to Death that we must die?

## LXXVII. WHO WOULD LIVE AGAIN?

OH who would live again to suffer loss?  
Once in my youth I battled with my fate,  
Grudging my days to death. I would have  
won

A place by violence beneath the sun.  
I took my pleasures madly as by force,  
Even the air of heaven was a prize.  
I stood a plunderer at death's very gate,  
And all the lands of life I did o'erun  
With sack and pillage. Then I scorned to  
die,

Save as a conqueror. The treasures  
Of love I ransacked; pity, pride and hate.  
All that can make hearts beat or brim  
men's eyes  
With living tears I took as robes to wear.  
— But see, now time has struck me on the  
hip.

I cannot hate nor love. My senses are  
Struck silent with the silence of my lip.  
No courage kindles in my heart to dare,  
No strength to do. The world's last phan-  
toms slip  
Out of my grasp, and naught is left but  
pain.  
Love, life, vain strength! — Oh who would  
live again?

## XCI. LAUGHTER AND DEATH

THERE is no laughter in the natural world  
Of beast or fish or bird, though no sad  
doubt  
Of their futurity to them unfurled  
Has dared to check the mirth-compelling  
shout.  
The lion roars his solemn thunder out  
To the sleeping woods. The eagle screams  
her cry.  
Even the lark must strain a serious throat  
To hurl his blest defiance at the sky.  
Fear, anger, jealousy have found a voice.  
Love's pain or rapture the brute bosoms  
swell.

Nature has symbols for her nobler joys,  
Her nobler sorrows. Who had dared fore-  
tell

That only man, by some sad mockery,  
Should learn to laugh who learns that he  
must die?

## XCV. HE IS NOT A POET

I WOULD not, if I could, be called a poet.  
I have no natural love of the "chaste muse."  
If aught be worth the doing I would do it;  
And others, if they will, may tell the news.  
I care not for their laurels but would  
choose

On the world's field to fight or fall or run.  
My soul's ambition will not take excuse  
To play the dial rather than the sun.  
The faith I held I hold, as when a boy  
I left my books for cricket-bat and gun.

The tales of poets are but scholars' themes.  
In my hot youth I held it that a man  
With heart to dare and stomach to enjoy  
Had better work to his hand in any plan  
Of any folly, so the thing were done,  
Than in the noblest dreaming of mere  
dreams.

FROM THE LOVE LYRICS OF  
PROTEUS

[1875.]

## SONG — LOVE ME A LITTLE

Love me a little, love me as thou wilt,  
Whether a draught it be of passionate  
wine

Poured with both hands divine,  
Or just a cup of water spilt  
On dying lips and mine.  
Give me the love thou wilt,  
The purity, the guilt,  
So it be thine.

Love me a little. Let it be thy cheek  
With its red signals. That were dear to  
kiss.

Or, if thou mayest not this,  
A finger-tip my own to seek  
At nightfall when none guess.  
Eyes have the wit to speak,  
And sighs send messages:  
Even give less.

Love me a little. Let it be in words  
Of happy omen heralding thy choice,  
Or in a veiled sad voice  
Of warning, like a frightened bird's.  
How should I not rejoice,  
Though swords be crossed with swords  
And discord mar love's chords  
And tears thy voice?

Love me a little. All my world thou art.  
Thy much were Heaven: thy little Earth  
shall be.

If not Eternity,  
Then Time be mine, the human part,  
A single hour with thee.  
Love as thou wilt and art,  
With all or half a heart,  
So thou love me.

## SONG — OH FLY NOT, PLEASURE

OH fly not, Pleasure, pleasant-hearted  
Pleasure.  
Fold me thy wings, I prithee, yet and  
stay.  
For my heart no measure  
Knows nor other treasure  
To buy a garland for my love to-day.

And thou too, Sorrow, tender-hearted Sorrow.  
Thou grey-eyed mourner, fly not yet away.

For I fain would borrow  
Thy sad weeds to-morrow  
To make a mourning for love's yesterday.

The voice of Pity, Time's divine dear Pity,  
Moved me to tears. I dared not say them nay,  
But went forth from the city  
Making thus my ditty  
Of fair love lost for ever and a day.

#### THE STRICKEN HART

THE stricken hart had fled the brake,  
His courage spent for life's dear sake.  
He came to die beside the lake.

The golden trout leaped up to view,  
The moorfowl clapped his wings and crew,  
The swallow brushed him as she flew.

He looked upon the glorious sun,  
His blood dropped slowly on the stone,  
He loved the life so nearly won,

And then he died. The ravens found  
A carcase couched upon the ground,  
They said their god had dealt the wound.

The Eternal Father calmly shook  
One page untitled from life's book.  
Few words. None ever cared to look.

Yet woe for life thus idly riven.  
He blindly loved what God had given,  
And love, some say, has conquered Heaven.

#### THE BROKEN PITCHER

ACCURSED be the hour of that sad day  
The careless potter put his hand to thee,  
And dared to fashion out of common clay  
So pure a shape as thou didst seem to me.

An idle boy, when vintage was begun,  
I passed and saw thy beauty for my sin,  
And poured unheedingly till it was done  
The red wine of my love's first gathering in.

And thou, ah! thou didst look at me and smile  
To see me give with such ungrudging hand,  
As taking all to thy dear heart, the while  
It only fell upon the thirsty sand.

Sad pitcher, thou wast broken at the well,  
Ere yet the shepherd's lip had tasted thine.

A god had lost in thee his hydromel,  
As I have wasted my poor wealth of wine.

Yet, wherefore wast thou made so fair a thing?

Or why of clay, whose fabric rightly were

Of finest gold, new-fashioned for a king,  
And framed by some divine artificer?

I will not curse thee, thou poor shape of clay,

That thou art other than thou seemed to be,

Yet I will break thee, that no passer may Unthinking break another heart on thee.

#### FROM ESTHER

[1892.]

##### L

HE who has once been happy is for aye  
Out of destruction's reach. His fortune then

Holds nothing secret, and Eternity,  
Which is a mystery to other men,  
Has like a woman given him its joy.  
Time is his conquest. Life, if it should fret,

Has paid him tribute. He can bear to die.  
He who has once been happy! When I set

The world before me and survey its range,  
Its mean ambitions, its scant fantasies,  
The shreds of pleasure which for lack of change

Men wrap around them and call happiness,

The poor delights which are the tale and sum  
Of the world's courage in its martyrdom;

##### LI

WHEN I hear music from a tavern door,  
When I see crowds agape and in the rain  
Watching on tiptoe and with stifled roar  
To see a rocket fired or a bull slain,  
When misers handle gold, when orators

Touch strong men's hearts with glory till they weep,  
When cities deck their streets for barren wars

Which have laid waste their youth, and when I keep

Calmly the count of my own life and see  
On what poor stuff my manhood's dreams were fed

Till I too learned what dole of vanity  
Will serve a human soul for daily bread,  
—Then I remember that I once was young

And lived with Esther the world's gods among.

# ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(1850-1894)

## FROM A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

[1885.]

### TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM FROM HER BOY

For the long nights you lay awake  
And watched for my unworthy sake;  
For your most comfortable hand  
That led me through the uneven land;  
For all the story-books you read;  
For all the pains you comforted;  
For all you pitied, all you bore,  
In sad and happy days of yore;  
My second Mother, my first Wife,  
The angel of my infant life—  
From the sick child, now well and old,  
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read  
May find as dear a nurse at need,  
And every child who lists my rhyme,  
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,  
May hear it in as kind a voice  
As made my childish days rejoice!

R. L. S.

### BED IN SUMMER

In winter I get up at night  
And dress by yellow candle-light.  
In summer, quite the other way,  
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see  
The birds still hopping on the tree,  
Or hear the grown-up people's feet  
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,  
When all the sky is clear and blue,  
And I should like so much to play,  
To have to go to bed by day?

### A THOUGHT

It is very nice to think  
The world is full of meat and drink,  
With little children saying grace  
In every Christian kind of place.

### YOUNG NIGHT THOUGHT

All night long and every night,  
When my mama puts out the light,  
I see the people marching by,  
As plain as day, before my eye.

Armies and emperors and kings,  
All carrying different kinds of things,  
And marching in so grand a way,  
You never saw the like by day.

So fine a show was never seen  
At the great circus on the green;  
For every kind of beast and man  
Is marching in that caravan.

At first they move a little slow,  
But still the faster on they go,  
And still beside them close I keep  
Until we reach the Town of Sleep.

### WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN

A CHILD should always say what's true  
And speak when he is spoken to,  
And behave mannerly at table;  
At least as far as he is able.

### RAIN

THE rain is raining all around,  
It falls on field and tree,  
It rains on the umbrellas here,  
And on the ships at sea.

### PIRATE STORY

THREE of us afloat in the meadow by the  
swing,  
Three of us aboard in the basket on the  
lea.

Winds are in the air, they are blowing in  
the spring,  
And waves are on the meadow like the  
waves there are at sea.

Where shall we adventure, to-day that  
we're afloat,  
Wary of the weather and steering by a  
star?  
Shall it be to Africa, a-steering of the  
boat,  
To Providence, or Babylon, or off to  
Malabar?

Hi! but here's a squadron a-rowing on  
the sea—  
Cattle on the meadow a-charging with  
a roar!  
Quick, and we'll escape them, they're as  
mad as they can be,  
The wicket is the harbour and the garden  
is the shore.

## FOREIGN LANDS

Up into the cherry tree  
Who should climb but little me?  
I held the trunk with both my hands  
And looked abroad on foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,  
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,  
And many pleasant places more  
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass  
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;  
The dusty roads go up and down  
With people tramping into town.

If I could find a higher tree  
Farther and farther I should see,  
To where the grown-up river slips  
Into the sea among the ships.

To where the roads on either hand  
Lead onward into fairy-land,  
Where all the children dine at five,  
And all the playthings come alive.

## TRAVEL

I SHOULD like to rise and go  
Where the golden apples grow;—  
Where below another sky  
Parrot islands anchored lie,  
And, watched by cockatoos and goats,  
Lonely Crusoes building boats;—  
Where in sunshine reaching out  
Eastern cities, miles about,  
Are with mosque and minaret  
Among sandy gardens set,  
And the rich goods from near and far  
Hang for sale in the bazaar;—  
Where the Great Wall round China goes,  
And on one side the desert blows,  
And with bell and voice and drum,  
Cities on the other hum;—  
Where are forests, hot as fire,  
Wide as England, tall as a spire,  
Full of apes and cocoa-nuts  
And the negro hunters' huts;—  
Where the knotty crocodile  
Lies and blinks in the Nile,  
And the red flamingo flies  
Hunting fish before his eyes;—  
Where in jungles, near and far,  
Man-devouring tigers are,  
Lying close and giving ear,  
Lest the hunt be drawing near,  
Or a comer-by be seen  
Swinging in a palanquin;—  
Where among the desert sands  
Some deserted city stands,  
All its children, sweep and prince,  
Grown to manhood ages since,  
Not a foot in street or house,  
Not a stir of child or mouse,

And when kindly falls the night,  
In all the town no spark of light,  
There I'll come when I'm a man  
With a camel caravan;  
Light a fire in the gloom  
Of some dusty dining room;  
See the pictures on the walls,  
Heroes, fights and festivals;  
And in a corner find the toys  
Of the old Egyptian boys.

## SINGING

OF speckled eggs the birdie sings  
And nests among the trees;  
The sailor sings of ropes and things  
In ships upon the seas.

The children sing in far Japan,  
The children sing in Spain;  
The organ with the organ man  
Is singing in the rain.

## LOOKING FORWARD

WHEN I am grown to man's estate  
I shall be very proud and great,  
And tell the other girls and boys  
Not to meddle with my toys.

## AUNTIE'S SKIRTS

WHENEVER Auntie moves around,  
Her dresses make a curious sound;  
They trail behind her up the floor,  
And trundle after through the door.

## THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

WHEN I was sick and lay a-bed,  
I had two pillows at my head,  
And all my toys beside me lay  
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so  
I watched my leaden soldiers go,  
With different uniforms and drills,  
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets  
All up and down among the sheets;  
Or brought my trees and houses out,  
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still  
That sits upon the pillow-hill,  
And sees before him, dale and plain,  
The pleasant Land of Counterpane.

## THE LAND OF NOD

FROM breakfast on through all the day  
At home among my friends I stay,  
But every night I go abroad  
Afar into the Land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,  
With none to tell me what to do—  
All alone beside the streams  
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,  
Both things to eat and things to see,  
And many frightening sights abroad  
Till morning in the Land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,  
I never can get back by day,  
Nor can remember plain and clear  
The curious music that I hear.

### MY SHADOW

I HAVE a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—  
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stands so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

### SYSTEM

EVERY night my prayers I say,  
And get my dinner every day;  
And every day that I've been good,  
I get an orange after food.

The child that is not plain and neat,  
With lots of toys and things to eat,  
He is a naughty child, I'm sure—  
Or else his dear papa is poor.

### ESCAPE AT BEDTIME

THE lights from the parlour and kitchen shone out  
Through the blinds and the windows and bars;  
And high overhead and all moving about,  
There were thousands of millions of stars.  
There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a tree,  
Nor of people in church or the Park,  
As the crowds of the stars that looked down upon me,  
And that glittered and winked in the dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,  
And the star of the sailor, and Mars,  
These shone in the sky, and the pail by the wall  
Would be half full of water and stars.  
They saw me at last, and they chased me with cries,  
And they soon had me packed into bed;  
But the glory kept shining and bright in my eyes,  
And the stars going round in my head.

### THE COW

THE friendly cow all red and white,  
I love with all my heart:  
She gives me cream with all her might,  
To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,  
And yet she cannot stray,  
All in the pleasant open air,  
The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass  
And wet with all the showers,  
She walks among the meadow grass  
And eats the meadow flowers.

### HAPPY THOUGHT

THE world is so full of a number of things,  
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

### GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN

CHILDREN, you are very little,  
And your bones are very brittle;  
If you would grow great and stately,  
You must try to walk sedately.

You must still be bright and quiet,  
And content with simple diet;  
And remain, through all bewilder'ing,  
Innocent and honest children.

Happy hearts and happy faces,  
Happy play in grassy places—  
That was how, in ancient ages,  
Children grew to kings and sages.

But the unkind and the unruly,  
And the sort who eat unduly,  
They must never hope for glory—  
Theirs is quite a different story!

Cruel children, crying babies,  
All grow up as geese and gabies,  
Hated, as their age increases,  
By their nephews and their nieces.

#### FOREIGN CHILDREN

LITTLE Indian, Sioux or Crow,  
Little frosty Eskimo,  
Little Turk or Japanees,  
O! don't you wish that you were me?

You have seen the scarlet trees  
And the lions over seas;  
You have eaten ostrich eggs,  
And turned the turtles off their legs.

Such a life is very fine,  
But it's not so nice as mine:  
You must often, as you trod,  
Have wearied *not* to be abroad.

You have curious things to eat,  
I am fed on proper meat;  
You must dwell beyond the foam,  
But I am safe and live at home.  
Little Indian, Sioux or Crow,  
Little frosty Eskimo,  
Little Turk or Japanees,  
O! don't you wish that you were me?

#### THE SUN'S TRAVELS

THE sun is not a-bed, when I  
At night upon my pillow lie;  
Still round the earth his way he takes,  
And morning after morning makes.

While here at home, in shining day,  
We round the sunny garden play,  
Each little Indian sleepy-head  
Is being kissed and put to bed.

And when at eve I rise from tea,  
Day dawns beyond the Atlantic Sea;  
And all the children in the West  
Are getting up and being dressed.

#### THE LAMPLIGHTER

My tea is nearly ready and the sun has  
left the sky;  
It's time to take the window to see Leerie  
going by;

For every night at teatime and before you  
take your seat,  
With lantern and with ladder he comes  
posting up the street.

Now Tom would be a driver and Maria  
go to sea,  
And my papa's a banker and as rich as  
he can be;  
But I, when I am stronger and can choose  
what I'm to do,  
O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light  
the lamps with you!

For we are very lucky, with a lamp be-  
fore the door,  
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights  
so many more;  
And O! before you hurry by with ladder  
and with light,  
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him  
to-night!

#### THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,  
Up in the air so blue?  
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing  
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,  
Till I can see so wide,  
Rivers and trees and cattle and all  
Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,  
Down on the roof so brown—  
Up in the air I go flying again,  
Up in the air and down!

#### FROM A RAILWAY CARRIAGE

FASTER than fairies, faster than witches,  
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;  
And charging along like troops in a battle,  
All through the meadows the horses and  
cattle:

All of the sights of the hill and the plain  
Fly as thick as driving rain;  
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,  
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clammers and  
scrambles,—  
All by himself and gathering brambles;  
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;  
And there is the green for stringing the  
daisies!

Here is a cart run away in the road  
Lumping along with man and load;  
And here is a mill and there is a river:  
Each a glimpse and gone for ever!

## THE UNSEEN PLAYMATE

WHEN children are playing alone on the green,  
In comes the playmate that never was seen.  
When children are happy and lonely and good,  
The Friend of the Children comes out of the wood.

Nobody heard him and nobody saw,  
His is a picture you never could draw,  
But he's sure to be present, abroad or at home,  
When children are happy and playing alone.

He lies in the laurels, he runs on the grass,  
He sings when you tinkle the musical glass;  
Whene'er you are happy and cannot tell why,  
The Friend of the Children is sure to be by!

He loves to be little, he hates to be big,  
'Tis he that inhabits the caves that you dig;  
'Tis he when you play with your soldiers of tin  
That sides with the Frenchmen and never can win.

'Tis he, when at night you go off to your bed,  
Bids you go to your sleep and not trouble your head;  
For wherever they're lying, in cupboard or shelf,  
'Tis he will take care of your playthings himself!

## MY KINGDOM

DOWN by a shining water well  
I found a very little dell,  
No higher than my head.  
The heather and the gorse about  
In summer bloom were coming out,  
Some yellow and some red.

I called the little pool a sea;  
The little hills were big to me;  
For I am very small.

I made a boat, I made a town,  
I searched the caverns up and down,  
And named them one and all.

And all about was mine, I said,  
The little sparrows overhead,  
The little minnows too.  
This was the world and I was king;  
For me the bees came by to sing,  
For me the swallows flew.

I played there were no deeper seas,  
Nor any wider plains than these,  
Nor other kings than me.  
At last I heard my mother call  
Out from the house at evenfall,  
To call me home to tea.

And I must rise and leave my dell,  
And leave my dimpled water well,  
And leave my heather blooms.  
Alas! and as my home I neared,  
How very big my nurse appeared,  
How great and cool the rooms!

## THE LAND OF STORY-BOOKS

At evening when the lamp is lit,  
Around the fire my parents sit;  
They sit at home and talk and sing,  
And do not play at anything.

Now, with my little gun, I crawl  
All in the dark along the wall,  
And follow round the forest track  
Away behind the sofa back.

There, in the night, where none can spy,  
All in my hunter's camp I lie,  
And play at books that I have read  
Till it is time to go to bed.

These are the hills, these are the woods,  
These are my starry solitudes;  
And there the river by whose brink  
The roaring lions come to drink.

I see the others far away  
As if in firelit camp they lay,  
And I, like to an Indian scout,  
Around their party prowled about.

So, when my nurse comes in for me,  
Home I return across the sea,  
And go to bed with backward looks  
At my dear Land of Story-books.

# WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

(1849-1903)

## FROM IN HOSPITAL

[Composed 1873-75. — Published 1888.]

### ENTER PATIENT

THE morning mists still haunt the stony street;  
The northern summer air is shrill and cold;  
And lo, the Hospital, grey, quiet, old,  
Where Life and Death like friendly chafferers meet.  
Thro' the loud spaciousness and draughty gloom  
A small, strange child — so agèd yet so young! —  
Her little arm besplinted and beslung,  
Precedes me gravely to the waiting-room.  
I limp behind, my confidence all gone.  
The grey-haired soldier-porter waves me on,  
And on I crawl, and still my spirits fail:  
A tragic meanness seems so to environ  
These corridors and stairs of stone and iron,  
Cold, naked, clean — half-workhouse and half-jail.

### WAITING

A SQUARE, squat room (a cellar on promotion),  
Drab to the soul, drab to the very daylight;  
Plasters astray in unnatural-looking tinware:  
Scissors and lint and apothecary's jars.

Here, on a bench a skeleton would writhe from,  
Angry and sore, I wait to be admitted:  
Wait till my heart is lead upon my stomach,  
While at their ease two dressers do their chores.

One has a probe — it feels to me a crow-bar.  
A small boy sniffs and shudders after bluestone.  
A poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers.  
Life is (I think) a blunder and a shame.

### OPERATION

You are carried in a basket,  
Like a carcase from the shambles,  
To the theatre, a cockpit  
Where they stretch you on a table.

Then they bid you close your eyelids,  
And they mask you with a napkin,  
And the anaesthetic reaches  
Hot and subtle through your being.

And you gasp and reel and shudder  
In a rushing, swaying rapture,  
While the voices at your elbow  
Fade — receding — fainter — farther.

Lights about you shower and tumble,  
And your blood seems crystallising —  
Edged and vibrant, yet within you  
Racked and hurried back and forward.

Then the lights grow fast and furious,  
And you hear a noise of waters, —  
And you wrestle, blind and dizzy,  
In an agony of effort,

Till a sudden lull accepts you,  
And you sound an utter darkness . . .  
And awaken . . . with a struggle . . .  
On a hushed, attentive audience.

### STAFF NURSE: NEW STYLE

BLUE-EYED and bright of face but waning fast

Into the sere of virginal decay,  
I view her as she enters, day by day,  
As a sweet sunset almost overpast.  
Kindly and calm, patrician to the last,  
Superbly falls her gown of sober gray,  
And on her chignon's elegant array  
The plainest cap is somehow touched with caste.

She talks BEETHOVEN; frowns disapprobation

At BALZAC'S name, sighs it at 'poor GEORGE SAND'S';  
Knows that she has exceeding pretty hands;  
Speaks Latin with a right accentuation;  
And gives at need (as one who understands)  
Draught, counsel, diagnosis, exhortation.

### CASUALTY

As WITH varnish red and glistening  
Dripped his hair; his feet looked rigid;  
Raised, he settled stiffly sideways;  
You could see his hurts were spinal.

He had fallen from an engine,  
And been dragged along the metals.  
It was hopeless, and they knew it;  
So they covered him, and left him.

As he lay, by fits half sentient,  
Inarticulately moaning,  
With his stockinged soles protruded  
Stark and awkward from the blankets,

To his bed there came a woman,  
Stood and looked and sighed a little,  
And departed without speaking,  
As himself a few hours after.

I was told it was his sweetheart.  
They were on the eve of marriage.  
She was quiet as a statue,  
But her lip was grey and writhen.

## HOUSE-SURGEON

EXCEEDINGLY tall, but built so well his height  
Half-disappears in flow of chest and limb;  
Moustache and whisker trooper-like in trim;  
Frank-faced, frank-eyed, frank-hearted;  
always bright  
And always punctual — morning, noon, and night;  
Bland as a Jesuit, sober as a hymn;  
Humorous, and yet without a touch of whim;  
Gentle and amiable, yet full of fight.  
His piety, though fresh and true in strain.  
Has not yet whitewashed up his common mood  
To the dead blank of his particular Schism.  
Sweet, unaggressive, tolerant, most humane,  
Wild artists like his kindly elderhood,  
And cultivate his mild Philistinism.

APPARITION<sup>1</sup>

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,  
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his face —  
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,  
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,  
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity —  
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,  
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace  
Of passion and impudence and energy.  
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,  
Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,  
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:  
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,  
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,  
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

[<sup>1</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson.]

## DISCHARGED

CARRY me out  
Into the wind and the sunshine,  
Into the beautiful world.

O, the wonder, the spell of the streets!  
The stature and strength of the horses,  
The rustle and echo of footfalls,  
The flat roar and rattle of wheels!  
A swift tram floats huge on us . . .  
It's a dream?  
The smell of the mud in my nostrils  
Blows brave — like a breath of the sea!

As of old,  
Ambulant, undulant drapery,  
Vaguely and strangely provocative,  
Flutters and beckons. O, yonder —  
Is it? — the gleam of a stocking!  
Sudden, a spire  
Wedged in the mist! O, the houses,  
The long lines of lofty, grey houses,  
Cross-hatched with shadow and light!  
These are the streets . . .  
Each is an avenue leading  
Whither I will!

Free . . . !  
Dizzy, hysterical, faint,  
I sit, and the carriage rolls on with me  
Into the wonderful world.

## BALLADE OF DEAD ACTORS

[1888.]

WHERE are the passions they essayed,  
And where the tears they made to flow?  
Where the wild humours they portrayed  
For laughing worlds to see and know?  
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe?  
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall?  
And Millamant and Romeo?  
Into the night go one and all.

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed?  
The plumes, the armours — friend and foe?  
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade,  
The mantles glittering to and fro?  
The pomp, the pride, the royal show?  
The cries of war and festival?  
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow?  
Into the night go one and all.

The curtain falls, the play is played:  
The Beggar packs beside the Beau;  
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid;  
The Thunder huddles with the Snow.  
Where are the revellers high and low?  
The clashing swords? The lover's call?  
The dancers gleaming row on row?  
Into the night go one and all.

## ENVY

Prince, in one common overthrow  
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall:  
As dust that drives, as straws that blow,  
Into the night go one and all.

## DOUBLE BALLADE OF LIFE AND FATE

[1888.]

Fools may pine, and sots may swill,  
Cynics gibe and prophets rail,  
Moralists may scourge and drill,  
Preachers prose, and fainhearts quail.  
Let them whine, or threat, or wail!  
Till the touch of Circumstance  
Down to darkness sink the scale,  
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

What if skies be wan and chill?  
What if winds be harsh and stale?  
Presently the east will thrill,  
And the sad and shrunken sail,  
Bellying with a kindly gale,  
Bear you sunwards, while your chance  
Sends you back the hopeful hail:—  
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Idle shot or coming bill  
Hapless love or broken bail,  
Gulp it (never chew your pill!),  
And, if Burgundy should fail,  
Try the humbler pot of ale!  
Over all is heaven's expanse;  
Gold's to find among the shale.  
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

Dull Sir Joskin sleeps his fill,  
Good Sir Galahad seeks the Grail,  
Proud Sir Pertinax flaunts his frill,  
Hard Sir Aeger dints his mail;  
And the while by hill and dale  
Tristram's braveries gleam and glance,  
And his blithe horn tells its tale:—  
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Araminta's grand and shrill,  
Delia's passionate and frail,  
Doris drives an earnest quill,  
Athanasia takes the veil:  
Wiser Phyllis o'er her pail,  
At the heart of all romance  
Reading, sings to Strophon's flail:—  
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Every Jack must have his Jill  
(Even Johnson had his Thrale!):  
Forward, couples—with a will!  
This, the world, is not a jail.  
Hear the music, sprat and whale!  
Hands across, retire, advance!  
Though the doomsman's on your trail,  
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

## ENVY

Boys and girls, at slug and snail  
And their kindred look askance.  
Pay your footing on the nail:  
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

## WHEN YOU ARE OLD

[1888.]

WHEN you are old, and I am passed away—  
Passed, and your face, your golden face,  
is gray—  
I think, whate'er the end, this dream of  
mine,  
Comforting you, a friendly star will shine  
Down the dim slope where still you stumble  
and stray.

So may it be: that so dead Yesterday,  
No sad-eyed ghost but generous and gay,  
May serve you memories like almighty wine,  
When you are old!

Dear Heart, it shall be so. Under the  
sway  
Of death the past's enormous disarray  
Lies hushed and dark. Yet though there  
come no sign,  
Live on well pleased: immortal and divine  
Love shall still tend you, as God's angels  
may,  
When you are old.

## WHAT IS TO COME

[1888.]

WHAT is to come we know not. But we  
know  
That what has been was good — was good  
to show,  
Better to hide, and best of all to bear.  
We are the masters of the days that were:  
We have lived, we have loved, we have  
suffered . . . even so.

Shall we not take the ebb who had the  
flow?  
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our  
foe —  
Dear, though it spoil and break us! —  
need we care

What is to come?

Let the great winds their worst and wildest  
blow,  
Or the gold weather round us mellow  
slow:  
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can  
dare  
And we can conquer, though we may not  
share  
In the rich quiet of the afterglow  
What is to come.

### OUT OF THE NIGHT THAT COVERS ME

[Composed 1875. — Published 1888.]

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.

### THE SANDS ARE ALIVE WITH SUNSHINE

[Composed 1875. — Published 1888.]

THE sands are alive with sunshine,  
The bathers lounge and throng,  
And out in the bay a bugle  
Is lilting a gallant song.

The clouds go racing eastward,  
The blithe wind cannot rest,  
And a shard on the shingle flashes  
Like the shining soul of a jest;  
  
While children romp in the surges,  
And sweethearts wander free,  
And the Firth as with laughter dimples . . .  
I would it were deep over me!

### A CHILD

[Composed 1876. — Published 1888.]

A child,  
Curious and innocent,  
Slips from his Nurse, and rejoicing  
Loses himself in the Fair.

Thro' the jostle and din  
Wandering, he revels,  
Dreaming, desiring, possessing;  
Till, of a sudden  
Tired and afraid, he beholds  
The sordid assemblage  
Just as it is; and he runs  
With a sob to his Nurse  
(Lighting at last on him),  
And in her motherly bosom  
Cries him to sleep.

Thus thro' the World,  
Seeing and feeling and knowing,  
Goes Man: till at last,  
Tired of experience, he turns  
To the friendly and comforting breast  
Of the old nurse, Death.

### THE WAYS ARE GREEN

[Composed 1878. — Published 1888.]

THE ways are green with the gladdening  
sheen  
Of the young year's fairest daughter.  
O, the shadows that fleet o'er the springing  
wheat!  
O, the magic of running water!  
The spirit of spring is in every thing,  
The banners of spring are streaming,  
We march to a tune from the fifes of  
June,  
And life's a dream worth dreaming.

It's all very well to sit and spell  
At the lesson there's no gainsaying;  
But what the deuce are wont and use  
When the whole mad world's a-maying?  
When the meadow glows, and the orchard  
snows,  
And the air's with love-motes teeming,  
When fancies break, and the senses wake,  
O, life's a dream worth dreaming!

What Nature has writ with her lusty wit  
Is worded so wisely and kindly  
That whoever has dipped in her manu-  
script  
Must up and follow her blindly.  
Now the summer prime is her blithest  
rhyme  
In the being and the seeming,  
And they that have heard the overword  
Know life's a dream worth dreaming.

### LIFE IN HER CREAKING SHOES

[Composed 1878. — Published 1888.]

LIFE in her creaking shoes  
Goes, and more formal grows,  
A round of calls and cues:  
Love blows as the wind blows.  
Blows! . . . in the quiet close  
As in the roaring mart,  
By ways no mortal knows  
Love blows into the heart.

The stars some cadence use,  
Forthright the river flows,  
In order fall the dews,  
Love blows as the wind blows:  
Blows! . . . and what reckoning shows  
The courses of his chart?  
A spirit that comes and goes,  
Love blows into the heart.

*... Coming and  
moving down  
going down  
leaving down  
and*

### A LATE LARK TWITTERS FROM THE QUIET SKIES

[Composed 1876. — Published 1886.]

A LATE lark twitters from the quiet skies;  
And from the west,  
Where the sun, his day's work ended,  
Lingers as in content,  
There falls on the old, grey city  
An influence luminous and serene,  
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends  
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires  
Shine, and are changed. In the valley  
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The  
sun,  
Closing his benediction,  
Sinks, and the darkening air  
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing  
night —  
Night with her train of stars  
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!  
My task accomplished and the long day  
done,  
My wages taken, and in my heart  
Some late lark singing,  
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,  
The sundown splendid and serene,  
Death.

### OR EVER THE KNIGHTLY YEARS WERE GONE

[1888.]

Or ever the knightly years were gone  
With the old world to the grave,  
I was a King in Babylon  
And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,  
I bent and broke your pride.  
You loved me well, or I heard them lie,  
But your longing was denied.  
Surely I knew that by and by  
You cursed your gods and died.

And a myriad suns have set and shone  
Since then upon the grave  
Decreed by the King of Babylon  
To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,  
For it tramples me again.  
The old resentment lasts like death,  
For you love, yet you refrain.  
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,  
And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone  
The deed beyond the grave,  
When I was a King in Babylon  
And you were a Virgin Slave.

### CROSSES AND TROUBLES

[1888.]

CROSSES and troubles a-many have proved  
me.  
One or two women (God bless them!)  
have loved me.  
I have worked and dreamed, and I've  
talked at will.  
Of art and drink I have had my fill.  
I've comforted here, and I've succoured  
there.  
I've faced my foes, and I've backed my  
friends.  
I've blundered, and sometimes made  
amends.  
I have prayed for light, and I've known  
despair.  
Now I look before, as I look behind,  
Come storm, come shine, whatever befall,  
With a grateful heart and a constant mind,  
For the end I know is the best of all.

### LONDON VOLUNTARIES

[Composed 1890-92. — Published 1892.]

#### NO. I. Grave

St. MARGARET's bells,  
Quiring their innocent, old-world canticles,  
Sing in the storied air,  
All rosy-and-golden, as with memories  
Of woods at evensong, and sands and seas  
Disconsolate for that the night is nigh.  
O, the low, lingering lights! The large last  
gleam  
(Hark! how those brazen choristers cry  
and call!)  
Touching these solemn ancientries, and  
there,  
The silent River ranging tide-mark high  
And the callow, grey-faced Hospital,  
With the strange glimmer and glamour of  
a dream!  
The Sabbath peace is in the slumbrous  
trees,  
And from the wistful, the fast-widowing  
sky  
(Hark! how those plangent comforters  
call and cry!)  
Falls as in August plots late roseleaves  
fall.  
The sober Sabbath stir —  
Leisurely voices, desultory feet! —  
Comes from the dry, dust-coloured street,  
Where in their summer frocks the girls go  
by,  
And sweethearts lean and loiter and confer,  
Just as they did an hundred years ago,  
Just as an hundred years to come they  
will: —

When you and I, Dear Love, lie lost and low,  
And sweet-throats none our welkin shall fulfil,  
Nor any sunset fade serene and slow;  
But, being dead, we shall not grieve to die.

NO. II. *Andante con moto*

FORTH from the dust and din,  
The crush, the heat, the many-spotted glare,  
The odour and sense of life and lust afare,  
The wrangle and jangle of unrests,  
Let us take horse, Dear Heart, take horse and win —  
As from swart August to the green lap of May —  
To quietness and the fresh and fragrant breasts  
Of the still, delicious night, not yet aware  
In any of her innumerable nests  
Of that first sudden splash of dawn,  
Clear, sapphirine, luminous, large,  
Which tells that soon the flowing springs of day  
In deep and ever deeper eddies drawn  
Forward and up, in wider and wider way,  
Shall float the sands, and brim the shores,  
On this our lith of the World, as round it roars  
And spins into the outlook of the Sun  
(The Lord's first gift, the Lord's especial charge),  
With light, with living light, from marge to marge  
Until the course He set and staked be run.

Through street and square, through square and street,  
Each with his home-grown quality of dark  
And violated silence, loud and fleet,  
Waylaid by a merry ghost at every lamp.  
The hansom wheels and plunges. Hark, O, hark,  
Sweet, how the old mare's bit and chain  
Ring back a rough refrain  
Upon the marked and cheerful tramp  
Of her four shoes! Here is the Park,  
And O, the languid midsummer wafts adust,  
The tired midsummer blooms!  
O, the mysterious distances, the glooms  
Romantic, the august  
And solemn shapes! At night this City of Trees  
Turns to a tryst of vague and strange  
And monstrous Majesties,  
Let loose from some dim underworld to range  
These terrene vistas till their twilight sets:

When, dispossessed of wonderfulness, they stand  
Beggared and common, plain to all the land  
For stocks of leaves! And lo! the Wizard Hour,  
His silent, shining sorcery winged with power!  
Still, still the streets, between their carcanets  
Of linking gold, are avenues of sleep.  
But see how gable ends and parapets  
In gradual beauty and significance  
Emerge! And did you hear  
That little twitter-and-cheep,  
Breaking inordinately loud and clear  
On this still, spectral, exquisite atmosphere?  
'Tis a first nest at matins! And behold  
A rakehell cat — how furtive and acold!  
A spent witch homing from some infamous dance —  
Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and fade  
Through shadowy railings into a pit of shade!  
And now! a little wind and shy,  
The smell of ships (that earnest of romance),  
A sense of space and water, and thereby  
A lamplit bridge touching the troubled sky,  
And look, O, look! a tangle of silver gleams  
And dusky lights, our River and all his dreams,  
His dreams that never save in our deaths can die.

What miracle is happening in the air,  
Charging the very texture of the gray  
With something luminous and rare?  
The night goes out like an ill-parcelled fire,  
And, as one lights a candle, it is day.  
The extinguisher, that perks it like a spire  
On the little formal church, is not yet green  
Across the water: but the house-tops nigher,  
The corner-lines, the chimneys — look how clean,  
How new, how naked! See the batch of boats,  
Here at the stairs, washed in the fresh-sprung beam!  
And those are barges that were goblin floats,  
Black, hag-steered, fraught with devilry and dream!  
And in the piles the water frolics clear.  
The ripples into loose rings wander and flee,  
And we — we can behold that could but hear

The ancient River singing as he goes,  
New-mailed in morning, to the ancient  
Sea.  
The gas burns lank and jaded in its glass:  
The old Ruffian soon shall yawn himself  
awake,  
And light his pipe, and shoulder his tools,  
and take  
His hobnailed way to work!

Let us too pass—  
Pass ere the sun leaps and your shadow  
shows—  
Through these long, blindfold rows  
Of casements staring blind to right and  
left,  
Each with his gaze turned inward on some  
piece  
Of life in death's own likeness—Life  
bereft  
Of living looks as by the Great Release—  
Pass to an exquisite night's more ex-  
quisite close!  
  
Reach upon reach of burial—so they feel,  
These colonies of dreams! And as we  
steal  
Homeward together, but for the buxom  
breeze,  
Fitfully frolicking to heel  
With news of dawn-drenched woods and  
tumbling seas,  
We might—thus awed, thus lonely that  
we are—  
Be wandering some dispeopled star,  
Some world of memories and unbroken  
graves,  
So broods the abounding Silence near and  
far:  
Till even your footfall craves  
Forgiveness of the majesty it braves.

NO. III. *Scherzando*

DOWN through the ancient Strand  
The spirit of October, mild and boon  
And sauntering, takes his way  
This golden end of afternoon,  
As though the corn stood yellow in all the  
land,  
And the ripe apples dropped to the harvest-  
moon.

Lo! the round sun, half-down the western  
slope—  
Seen as along an unglazed telescope—  
Lingers and lolls, loth to be done with  
day:  
Gifting the long, lean, lanky street  
And its abounding confluences of being  
With aspects generous and bland;  
Making a thousand harnesses to shine  
As with new ore from some enchanted  
mine,

And every horse's coat so full of sheen  
He looks new-tailored, and every 'bus feels  
clean,  
And never a hansom but is worth the  
feeling;  
And every jeweller within the pale  
Offers a real Arabian Night for sale;  
And even the roar  
Of the strong streams of toil, that pause  
and pour  
Eastward and westward, sounds suffused—  
Seems as it were bemused  
And blurred, and like the speech  
Of lazy seas on a lotus-haunted beach—  
With this enchanted lustrousness,  
This mellow magic, that (as a man's caress  
Brings back to some faded face, beloved  
before,  
A heavenly shadow of the grace it wore  
Ere the poor eyes were minded to beseech)  
Old things transfigures, and you hail and  
bless  
Their looks of long-lapsed loveliness once  
more:  
Till Clement's, angular and cold and staid,  
Gleams forth in glamour's very stuffs  
arrayed;  
And Bride's, her aëry, unsubstantial charm  
Through flight on flight of springing, soar-  
ing stone  
Grown flushed and warm,  
Laughs into life full-mooded and fresh-  
blown;  
And the high majesty of Paul's  
Uplifts a voice of living light, and calls—  
Calls to his millions to behold and see  
How goodly this his London Town can  
be!  
  
For earth and sky and air  
Are golden everywhere,  
And golden with a gold so suave and fine  
The looking on it lifts the heart like wine.  
Trafalgar Square  
(The fountains volleying golden glaze)  
Shines like an angel-market. High aloft  
Over his couchant Lions, in a haze  
Shimmering and bland and soft,  
A dust of chrysoprase,  
Our Sailor takes the golden gaze  
Of the saluting sun, and flames superb,  
As once he flamed it on his ocean round.  
The dingy dreariness of the picture-place,  
Turned very nearly bright,  
Takes on a luminous transiency of grace,  
And shows no more a scandal to the  
ground.  
The very blind man pottering on the kerb  
Among the posies and the ostrich feathers  
And the rude voices touched with all the  
weathers  
Of the long, varying year,  
Shares in the universal alms of light.

The windows, with their fleeting, flickering fires,  
The height and spread of frontage shining sheer,  
The quiring signs, the rejoicing roofs and spires—  
'Tis El Dorado—El Dorado plain,  
The Golden City! And when a girl goes by,  
Look! as she turns her glancing head,  
A call of gold is floated from her ear!  
Golden, all golden! In a golden glory,  
Long-lapsing down a golden coasted sky,  
The day not dies, but seems  
Dispersed in wafts and drifts of gold, and shed  
Upon a past of golden song and story  
And memories of gold and golden dreams.

NO. IV. *Largo e mesto*

Out of the poisonous East,  
Over a continent of blight,  
Like a maleficent Influence released  
From the most squalid cellarage of hell,  
The Wind-Fiend, the abominable—  
The Hangman Wind that tortures temper  
and light—  
Comes slouching, sullen and obscene,  
Hard on the skirts of the embittered night;  
And in a cloud unclean  
Of excremental humours, roused to strife  
By the operation of some ruinous change,  
Wherever his evil mandate run and range,  
Into a dire intensity of life,  
A craftsman at his bench, he settles down  
To the grim job of throttling London Town.

So, by a jealous lightlessness beset  
That might have oppressed the dragons of old time  
Crunching and groping in the abysmal slime,  
A cave of cut-throat thoughts and villainous dreams,  
Hag-rid and crying with cold and dirt and wet,  
The afflicted City, prone from mark to mark  
In shameful occultation, seems  
A nightmare labyrinthine, dim and drifting,  
With wavering gulfs and antic heights,  
and shifting,  
Rent in the stuff of a material dark,  
Wherein the lamplight, scattered and sick  
and pale,  
Shows like the leper's living blotch of bale:  
Uncoiling monstrous into street on street  
Paven with perils, teeming with mischance,  
Where man and beast go blindfold and in dread,

Working with oaths and threats and faltering feet  
Somewhither in the hideousness ahead;  
Working through wicked airs and deadly dews  
That make the laden robber grin askance  
At the good places in his black romance,  
And the poor, loitering harlot rather choose  
Go pinched and pined to bed  
Than lurk and shiver and curse her wretched way  
From arch to arch, scouting some three-penny prey.  
Forgot his dawns and far-flushed after-glowls,  
His green garlands and windy eyots forgot,  
The old Father-River flows,  
His watchfires cores of menace in the gloom,  
As he came oozing from the Pit, and bore,  
Sunk in his filthily transfigured sides,  
Shoals of dishonoured dead to tumble and rot  
In the squalor of the universal shore:  
His voices sounding through the gruesome air  
As from the Ferry where the Boat of Doom  
With her blaspheming cargo reels and rides:  
The while his children, the brave ships,  
No more adventurous and fair,  
Nor tripping it light of heel as home-bound brides,  
But infamously enchanted,  
Huddle together in the foul eclipse,  
Or feel their course by inches desperately,  
As through a tangle of alleys murder-haunted,  
From sinister reach to reach out—out—to sea.  
And Death the while—  
Death with his well-worn, lean, professional smile,  
Death in his threadbare working trim—  
Comes to your bedside, unannounced and bland,  
And with expert, inevitable hand  
Feels at your windpipe, fingers you in the lung,  
Or flicks the clot well into the labouring heart:  
Thus signifying unto old and young,  
However hard of mouth or wild of whim,  
'Tis time—'tis time by his ancient watch—to part  
From books and women and talk and drink and art.  
And you go humbly after him

To a mean suburban lodging: on the way  
To what or where  
Not Death, who is old and very wise, can  
say:  
And you — how should you care  
So long as, unreclaimed of hell,  
The Wind-Fiend, the insufferable,  
Thus vicious and thus patient, sits him  
down  
To the black job of burking London  
Town?

NO. V. *Allegro maestoso*

SPRING winds that blow  
As over leagues of myrtle-blooms and may;  
Bevies of spring clouds trooping slow,  
Like matrons heavy bosomed and aglow  
With the mild and placid pride of increase!  
Nay,  
What makes this insolent and comely  
stream  
Of appetence, this freshet of desire  
(Milk from the wild breasts of the wilful  
Day!),  
Down Piccadilly dance and murmur and  
glean  
In genial wave on wave and gyre on gyre?  
Why does that nymph unparalleled splash  
and churn  
The wealth of her enchanted urn  
Till, over-billowing all between  
Her cheerful margents, grey and living  
green,  
It floats and wanders, glittering and fleeing,  
An estuary of the joy of being?  
Why should the lovely leafage of the Park  
Touch to an ecstasy the act of seeing?  
— Sure, sure my paramour, my Bride of  
Brides,  
Lingering and flushed, mysteriously abides  
In some dim, eye-proof angle of odorous  
dark,  
Some smiling nook of green-and-golden  
shade,  
In the divine conviction robed and crowned  
The globe fulfils his immemorial round  
But as the marrying-place of all things  
made!

There is no man, this deifying day,  
But feels the primal blessing in his blood.  
There is no woman but disdains —  
The sacred impulse of the May  
Brightening like sex made sunshine through  
her veins —  
To vail the ensigns of her womanhood.  
None but, rejoicing, flaunts them as she  
goes,  
Bounteous in looks of her delicious best,  
On her inviolable quest:  
These with their hopes, with their sweet  
secrets those,  
But all desirable and frankly fair,  
As each were keeping some most pros-  
perous tryst,

And in the knowledge went imparadised!  
For look! a magical influence everywhere,  
Look how the liberal and transfiguring air  
Washes this inn of memorable meetings,  
This centre of ravishments and gracious  
greetings,  
Till, through its jocund loveliness of  
length  
A tidal-race of lust from shore to shore,  
A brimming reach of beauty met with  
strength,  
It shines and sounds like some miracu-  
lous dream,  
Some vision multitudinous and agleam,  
Of happiness as it shall be evermore!  
Praise God for giving  
Through this His messenger among the  
days  
His word the life He gave is thrice-worth  
living!  
For Pan, the bountiful, imperious Pan —  
Not dead, not dead, as impotent dreamers  
feigned,  
But the gay genius of a million Mays  
Renewing his beneficent endeavour! —  
Still reigns and triumphs, as he hath tri-  
umphed and reigned  
Since in the dim blue dawn of time  
The universal ebb-and-flow began,  
To sound his ancient music, and prevails,  
By the persuasion of his mighty rhyme,  
Here in this radiant and immortal street  
Lavishly and omnipotently as ever  
In the open hills, the undissembling dales,  
The laughing-places of the juvenile earth.  
For lo! the wills of man and woman meet,  
Meet and are moved, each unto each en-  
deared,  
As once in Eden's prodigal bowers befell,  
To share his shameless, elemental mirth  
In one great act of faith: while deep and  
strong,  
Incomparably nerved and cheered,  
The enormous heart of London joys to  
beat  
To the measures of his rough, majestic  
song;  
The lewd, perennial, overpowering spell  
That keeps the rolling universe ensphered,  
And life, and all for which life lives to  
long,  
Wanton and wondrous and for ever well.

## UNDER A STAGNANT SKY

(To James McNeill Whistler)

[1892.]

UNDER a stagnant sky,  
Gloom out of gloom uncoiling into gloom,  
The River, jaded and forlorn,  
Welters and wanders wearily — wretchedly  
— on;  
Yet in and out among the ribs

Of the old skeleton bridge, as in the piles  
 Of some dead lake-built city, full of skulls,  
 Worm-worn, rat-riddled, mouldy with memories,  
 Lingers to babble to a broken tune  
 (Once, O, the unvoiced music of my heart!)

So melancholy a soliloquy  
 It sounds as it might tell  
 The secret of the unending grief-in-grain,  
 The terror of Time and Change and Death,  
 That wastes this floating, transitory world.

What of the incantation  
 That forced the huddled shapes on yonder shore  
 To take and wear the night  
 Like a material majesty?  
 That touched the shafts of wavering fire  
 About this miserable welter and wash—  
 (River, O River of Journeys, River of Dreams!)  
 Into long, shining signals from the panes  
 Of an enchanted pleasure-house,  
 Where life and life might live life lost in life  
 For ever and evermore?

O Death! O Change! O Time!  
 Without you, O, the insufferable eyes  
 Of these poor Might-Have-Beens,  
 These fatuous, ineffectual Yesterdays!

#### FRESH FROM HIS FASTNESSES

[1892.]

FRESH from his fastnesses  
 Wholesome and spacious,  
 The North Wind, the mad huntsman,  
 Halloas on his white hounds  
 Over the grey, roaring  
 Reaches and ridges,  
 The forest of ocean,  
 The chace of the world.  
 Hark to the peal  
 Of the pack in full cry,  
 As he thongs them before him,  
 Swarming voluminous,  
 Welteling, wide-wallowing,  
 Till in a ruining  
 Chaos of energy,  
 Hurled on their quarry,  
 They crash into foam!

Old Indefatigable,  
 Time's right-hand man, the sea  
 Laughs as in joy  
 From his millions of wrinkles;  
 Laughs that his destiny,

Great with the greatness  
 Of triumphing order,  
 Shows as a dwarf  
 By the strength of his heart  
 And the might of his hands.

Master of masters,  
 O maker of heroes,  
 Thunder the brave,  
 Irresistible message:—  
 'Life is worth Living  
 Through every grain of it,  
 From the foundations  
 To the last edge  
 Of the cornerstone, death.'

#### SPACE AND DREAD AND THE DARK

[1892.]

SPACE and dread and the dark—  
 Over a livid stretch of sky  
 Cloud-monsters crawling, like a funeral train  
 Of huge, primeval presences  
 Stooping beneath the weight  
 Of some enormous, rudimentary grief;  
 While in the haunting loneliness  
 The far sea waits and wanders with a sound  
 As of the trailing skirts of Destiny,  
 Passing unseen  
 To some immittigable end  
 With her grey henchman, Death.

What larve, what spectre is this  
 Thrilling the wilderness to life  
 As with the bodily shape of Fear?  
 What but a desperate sense,  
 A strong foreboding of those dim  
 Interminable continents, forlorn  
 And many-silenced, in a dusk  
 Inviolable utterly, and dead  
 As the poor dead it huddles and swarms  
 and stytes  
 In hugger-mugger through eternity?

Life—life—let there be life!  
 Better a thousand times the roaring hours  
 When wave and wind,  
 Like the Arch-Murderer in flight  
 From the Avenger at his heel,  
 Storms through the desolate fastnesses  
 And wild waste places of the world!

Life—give me life until the end,  
 That at the very top of being,  
 The battle-spirit shouting in my blood,  
 Out of the reddest hell of the fight  
 I may be snatched and flung  
 Into the everlasting lull,  
 The immortal, incommunicable dream,

# AUSTIN DOBSON

(1840-1921)

## A GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL [1877.]

He lived in that past Georgian day,  
When men were less inclined to say  
That "Time is Gold," and overlay  
With toil their pleasure;  
He held some land, and dwelt thereon,—  
Where, I forget,—the house is gone;  
His Christian name, I think, was John,—  
His surname, Leisure.

Reynolds has painted him,—a face  
Filled with a fine, old-fashioned grace,  
Fresh-coloured, frank, with ne'er a trace  
Of trouble shaded;  
The eyes are blue, the hair is drest  
In plainest way,—one hand is prest  
Deep in a flapped canary vest,  
With buds brocaded.

He wears a brown old Brunswick coat,  
With silver buttons,—round his throat,  
A soft cravat;—in all you note  
An elder fashion,—  
A strangeness, which, to us who shine  
In shapely hats,—whose coats combine  
All harmonies of hue and line,—  
Inspires compassion.

He lived so long ago, you see!  
Men were untravelled then, but we,  
Like Ariel, post o'er land and sea  
With careless parting;  
He found it quite enough for him  
To smoke his pipe in "garden trim,"  
And watch, about the fish tank's brim,  
The swallows darting.

He liked the well-wheel's creaking tongue,—  
He liked the thrush that fed her young,—  
He liked the drone of flies among  
His netted peaches;  
He liked to watch the sunlight fall  
Athwart his ivied orchard wall;  
Or pause to catch the cuckoo's call  
Beyond the beeches.

His were the times of Paint and Patch,  
And yet no Ranelagh could match  
The sober doves that round his thatch  
Spread tails and sidled;  
He liked their ruffling, puffed content,—  
For him their drowsy wheelings meant  
More than a Mall of Beaux that bent,  
Or Belles that bridled.

Not that, in truth, when life began,  
He shunned the flutter of the fan;  
He too had maybe "pinked his man"  
In Beauty's quarrel;  
But now his "fervent youth" had flown  
Where lost things go; and he was grown  
As staid and slow-paced as his own  
Old hunter, Sorrel.

Yet still he loved the chase, and held  
That no composer's score excelled  
The merry horn, when Sweetlip swelled  
Its jovial riot;  
But most his measured words of praise  
Caressed the angler's easy ways,—  
His idly meditative days,—  
His rustic diet.

Not that his "meditating" rose  
Beyond a sunny summer doze;  
He never troubled his repose  
With fruitless prying;  
But heid, as law for high and low,  
What God withholds no man can know,  
And smiled away inquiry so,  
Without replying.

We read—alas, how much we read! —  
The jumbled strife of creed and creed  
With endless controversies feed  
Our groaning tables;  
His books—and they sufficed him—were  
Cotton's "Montaigne," "The Grave" of  
Blair,  
A "Walton"—much the worse for wear—  
And "Æsop's Fables."

One more,—"The Bible." Not that he  
Had searched its page as deep as we;  
No sophistries could make him see  
Its slender credit;  
It may be that he could not count  
The sires and sons to Jesse's fount,—  
He liked the "Sermon on the Mount,"—  
And more, he read it.

Once he had loved, but failed to wed,  
A red-cheeked lass who long was dead;  
His ways were far too slow, he said,  
To quite forget her;  
And still when time had turned him gray  
The earliest hawthorn buds in May  
Would find his lingering feet astray,  
Where first he met her.

*"In Calo Quies"* heads the stone  
On Leisure's grave,— now little known,  
A tangle of wild-rose has grown

So thick across it;  
The "Benefactions" still declare  
He left the clerk an elbow-chair,  
And "12 Pence Yearly to Prepare  
A Christmas Posset."

Lie softly, Leisure! Doubtless you  
With too serene a conscience drew  
Your easy breath, and slumbered through  
The gravest issue;  
But we, to whom our age allows  
Scarce space to wipe our weary brows,  
Look down upon your narrow house,  
Old friend, and miss you!

## THE BALLAD A-LA-MODE

[1877.]

"Tout vient à point à qui sait attendre."

SCENE—*A Boudoir Louis-Quinze, painted with Cupids shooting at Butterflies.*

THE COUNTESS. The Baron (*her cousin and suitor*)

THE COUNTESS (*looking up from her work*)  
Baron, you doze.

THE BARON (*closing his book*)

I, Madame? No.  
I wait your order—Stay or Go.

## THE COUNTESS

Which means, I think, that Go or Stay  
Affects you nothing, either way.

## THE BARON

Excuse me,—by your favour graced,  
My inclinations are effaced.

## THE COUNTESS

Or much the same. How keen you grow!  
You must be reading MARIVAUX.

## THE BARON

Nay,—'twas a song of SAINTE-AULAIRE.

## THE COUNTESS

Then read me one. We've time to spare;  
If I can catch the clock-face there,  
'Tis barely eight.

## THE BARON

What shall it be,—  
A tale of woe, or perfidy?

## THE COUNTESS

Not woes, I beg. I doubt your woes:  
But perfidy, of course, one knows.

THE BARON (*reads*)

"Ah, Phillis! cruel Phillis!  
(I heard a Shepherd say,)  
You hold me with your Eyes, and yet  
You bid me—Go my way!"

"Ah, Colin! foolish Colin!  
(The Maiden answered so,)  
If that be All, the Ill is small,  
I close them—You may go!"

"But when her Eyes she opened,  
(Although the Sun it shone,)  
She found the Shepherd had not stirred—  
'Because the Light was gone!'

"Ah, Cupid! wanton Cupid!  
'Twas ever thus your Way;  
When Maids would bid you fly your  
Wings, You find Excuse to stay!"

## THE COUNTESS

Famous! He earned whate'er he got:—  
But there's some sequel, is there not?

THE BARON (*turning the page*)  
I think not.—No. Unless 'tis this:  
My fate is far more hard than his;—  
In fact, your Eyes—

## THE COUNTESS

Now, that's a breach!  
Your bond is—not to make a speech,  
And we must start—so call JUSTINE.  
I know exactly what you mean!—  
Give me your arm—

## THE BARON

If, in return,  
Countess, I could your hand but earn!

## THE COUNTESS

I thought as much. This comes, you see,  
Of sentiment, and Arcady,  
Where vows are hung on every tree. . . .

THE BARON (*offering his arm, with a low bow*)

And no one dreams—of PERFIDY.

## "GOOD-NIGHT, BABETTE!"

[1877.]

"Si vieillesse pouvait!—"

SCENE—*A small neat Room. In a high Voltaire Chair sits a white-haired old Gentleman.*

MONSIEUR VIEUXBOIS.

BABETTE.

M. VIEUXBOIS (*turning querulously*)  
Day of my life! Where can she get?  
BABETTE! I say! BABETTE!—BABETTE!

BABETTE (*entering hurriedly*)

Coming, M'sieu'! If M'sieu' speaks  
So loud, he won't be well for weeks!

M. VIEUXBOIS

Where have you been?

BABETTE

Why, M'sieu' knows:—  
April! . . . Ville d'Avray! . . . Ma'am'-  
selle ROSE!

M. VIEUXBOIS

Ah! I am old,—and I forget.  
Was the place growing green, BABETTE?

BABETTE

But of a greenness!—yes, M'sieu'!  
And then the sky so blue!—so blue!  
And when I dropped my *immortelle*,  
How the birds sang!

(*Lifting her apron to her eyes*)  
This poor Ma'am'selle!

M. VIEUXBOIS

You're a good girl, BABETTE, but she,—  
She was an Angel, verily.  
Sometimes I think I see her yet  
Stand smiling by the cabinet;  
And once, I know, she peeped and laughed  
Betwixt the curtains . . .

Where's the draught?

(*She gives him a cup*)

Now I shall sleep, I think, BABETTE;—  
Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

BABETTE (*sings*)

*"Once at the Angelus*  
*(Ere I was dead),*  
*Angels all glorious*  
*Came to my Bed;*  
*Angels in blue and white*  
*Crowned on the Head."*

M. VIEUXBOIS (*drowsily*)

"She was an Angel" . . . "Once she  
laughed" . . . What, was I dreaming?

Where's the draught?

BABETTE (*showing the empty cup*)  
The draught, M'sieu'?

M. VIEUXBOIS

How I forgot!

I am so old! But sing, BABETTE!

BABETTE (*sings*)

*"One was the Friend I left*  
*Stark in the Snow;*  
*One was the Wife that died*  
*Long—long ago;*  
*One was the Love I lost,*  
*How could she know?" . . .*

M. VIEUXBOIS (*murmuring*)

Ah, PAUL! . . . old PAUL! . . . EULALIE  
too!  
And ROSE . . . And O! "the sky so blue!"

BABETTE (*sings*)

*"One had my Mother's eyes,*  
*Wistful and mild;*  
*One had my Father's face;*  
*One was a Child:*  
*All of them bent to me,—*  
*Bent down and smiled!"*

(He is asleep!)

M. VIEUXBOIS (*almost inaudibly*)

"How I forget!"  
"I am so old!" . . . "Good night,  
BABETTE!"

### TU QUOQUE

An Idyll in the Conservatory

[1873.]

*Ou ne rompons-nous pas?"* "—rompons-nous,  
—LE DÉPIT AMOUREUX.

NELLIE

If I were you, when ladies at the play, sir,  
Beckon and nod, a melodrama through,  
I would not turn abstractedly away, sir,  
If I were you!

FRANK

If I were you, when persons I affected,  
Wait for three hours to take me down to  
Kew,  
I would, at least, pretend I recollect,  
If I were you!

NELLIE

If I were you, when ladies are so lavish,  
Sir, as to keep me every waltz but two,  
I would not dance with *odious* Miss  
M'Tavish  
If I were you!

FRANK

If I were you, who vow you cannot suffer  
Whiff of the best,—the mildest "honey-  
dew,"  
I would not dance with smoke-consuming  
Puffer,  
If I were you!

NELLIE

If I were you, I would not, sir, be bitter,  
Even to write the "Cynical Review";--

FRANK

No, I should doubtless find flirtation fitter,  
If I were you!

NELLIE

Really! You would? Why, Frank, you're  
quite delightful,—  
Hot as Othello, and as black of hue;  
Borrow my fan. I would not look so  
*frightful*,  
If I were you!

FRANK

"It is the cause." I mean your chaperon  
is  
Bringing some well-curled juvenile.  
Adieu!  
I shall retire. I'd spare that poor Adonis,  
If I were you!

NELLIE

Go, if you will. At once! And by ex-  
press, sir!  
Where shall it be? To China—or Peru?  
Go. I should leave inquirers my address,  
sir,  
If I were you!

FRANK

No,—I remain. To stay and fight a duel  
Seems, on the whole, the proper thing  
to do;—  
Ah, you are strong,—I would not then be  
cruel,  
If I were you!

NELLIE

One does not like one's feelings to be  
doubted,—

FRANK

One does not like one's friends to mis-  
construe,—

NELLIE

If I confess that I a wee-bit pouted?

FRANK

I should admit that I was *pique*, too.

NELLIE

Ask me to dance! I'd say no more about it.  
If I were you!

[Waltz — *Exeunt*

#### A DIALOGUE FROM PLATO

[1873.]

"Le temps le mieux employé est celui qu'on  
perd." — CLAUDE TILLIER.

I'd "read" three hours. Both notes and  
text  
Were fast a mist becoming;  
In bounced a vagrant bee, perplexed,  
And filled the room with humming,

Then out. The casement's leafage sways,  
And, parted light, discloses  
Miss Di., with hat and book,—a maze  
Of muslin mixed with roses.

"You're reading Greek?" "I am—and  
you?"

"O, mine's a mere romancer!"  
"So Plato is." "Then read him—do;  
And I'll read mine in answer."

I read. "My Plato (Plato, too,—  
That wisdom thus should harden!)  
Declares 'blue eyes look doubly blue  
Beneath a Dolly Varden.'"

She smiled. "My book in turn avers  
(No author's name is stated)  
That sometimes those Philosophers  
Are sadly mis-translated."

"But hear,—the next's in stronger style:  
The Cynic School asserted  
That two red lips which part and smile  
May not be controverted!"

She smiled once more—"My book, I find,  
Observes some modern doctors  
Would make the Cynics out a kind  
Of album-verse concoctors."

Then I—"Why not? 'Ephesian law,  
No less than time's tradition,  
Enjoined fair speech on all who saw  
Diana's apparition."

She blushed—this time. "If Plato's page  
No wiser precept teaches,  
Then I'd renounce that doubtful sage,  
And walk to Burnham-beeches."

"Agreed," I said. "For Socrates  
(I find he too is talking)  
Thinks Learning can't remain at ease  
While Beauty goes a-walking."

She read no more. I leapt the sill:  
The sequel's scarce essential—  
Nay, more than this, I hold it still  
Profoundly confidential.

#### THE LOVE-Letter

[1873.]

"J'ai vu les moeurs de mon tems, et j'ai publié  
cette lettre." — LA NOUVELLE HÉLOÏSE.

If this should fail, why then I scarcely  
know  
What could succeed. Here's brilliancy  
(and banter),  
Byron *ad lib.*, a chapter of Rousseau;—  
If this should fail, then *tempora mutantur*;  
Style's out of date, and love, as a pro-  
fession,  
Acquires no aid from beauty of expression.

"The men who think as I, I fear, are few,"  
(Cynics would say 'twere well if they  
were fewer);  
"I am not what I seem," — (indeed, 'tis  
true);

Though, as a sentiment, it might be  
newer);

"Mine is a soul whose deeper feelings lie  
More deep than words" — (as these ex-  
emplify).

"I will not say when first your beauty's sun  
Illumed my life," — (it needs imagina-  
tion);

"For me to see you and to love were  
one," —

(This will account for some precipita-  
tion);

"Let it suffice that worship more devoted  
Ne'er throbbed," *et cetera*. The rest is  
quoted.

"If Love can look with all-prophetic eye," —  
(Ah, if he could, how many would be  
single!)

"If truly spirit unto spirit cry," —  
(The ears of some most terribly must  
tingle!)

"Then I have dreamed you will not turn  
your face,"

This next, I think, is more than common-  
place.

"Why should we speak, if Love, interpret-  
ing,

Forestall the speech with favour found  
before?

Why should we plead? — it were an idle  
thing,

If Love himself be Love's ambassador!"  
Blot, as I live! Shall we erase it? No; —  
Twill show we write *currente calamo*.

"My fate, — my fortune, I commit to  
you," —

(In point of fact, the latter's not ex-  
tensive);

"Without you I am poor indeed," — (strike  
through,

'Tis true but crude — 'twould make her  
apprehensive);

"My life is yours — I lay it at your feet,"  
(Having no choice but Hymen or the  
Fleet).

"Give me the right to stand within the  
shrine,

Where never yet my faltering feet in-  
truded;

Give me the right to call you wholly  
mine," —

(That is, Consols and Three-per-Cents  
included);

"To guard your rest from every care that  
cankers, —  
To keep your life, — (and balance at your  
banker's).

"Compel me not to long for your reply;  
Suspense makes havoc with the mind —  
(and muscles);

"Winged Hope takes flight," — (which  
means that I must fly,  
Default of funds, to Paris or to Brus-  
sels);

"I cannot wait! My own, my queen —  
Priscilla!  
Write by return." And now for a Ma-  
nilla!

"Miss Blank," at "Blank." Jemima, let it  
go;

And I, meanwhile, will idle with "Sir  
Walter";

Stay, let me keep the first rough copy,  
though —

'Twill serve again. There's but the name  
to alter;

And Love, — that starves, — must knock at  
every portal,

*In forma pauperis*. We are but mortal!

### TO "LYDIA LANGUISH"

[1873.]

"Il me faut des émotions." — BLANCHE AMORY.

You ask me, Lydia, "whether I,  
If you refuse my suit, shall die."  
(Now pray don't let this hurt you!)

Although the time be out of joint,  
I should not think a bodkin's point

The sole resource of virtue;  
Nor shall I, though your mood endure

Attempt a final Water-cure  
Except against my wishes;

For I respectfully decline  
To dignify the Serpentine,

And make *hors-d'oeuvres* for fishes;

But if you ask me whether I  
Composedly can go,

Without a look, without a sigh,  
Why, then I answer — No.

"You are assured," you sadly say  
(If in this most considerate way  
To treat my suit your will is),  
That I shall "quickly find as fair  
Some new Neera's tangled hair —  
Some easier Amaryllis."

I cannot promise to be cold  
If smiles are kind as yours of old

On lips of later beauties;  
Nor can I, if I would, forget

The homage that is Nature's debt,  
While man has social duties;

But if you ask shall I prefer  
To you I honour so,  
A somewhat visionary Her,  
I answer truly — No.

You fear, you frankly add, "to find  
In me too late the altered mind  
That altering Time estranges."  
To this I make response that we  
(As physiologists agree)  
Must have septennial changes;  
This is a thing beyond control,  
And it were best upon the whole  
To try and find out whether  
We could not, by some means, arrange  
This not-to-be-avoided change  
So as to change together;  
But, had you asked me to allow  
That you could ever grow  
Less amiable than you are now, —  
Emphatically — No.

But — to be serious — if you care  
To know how I shall really bear  
This much discussed rejection,  
I answer you. As feeling men  
Behave, in best romances, when  
You outrage their affection; —  
With that gesticulatory woe,  
By which, as melodramas show,  
Despair is indicated;  
Enforced by all the liquid grief  
Which hugest pocket-handkerchief  
Has ever simulated;  
And when, arrived so far, you say  
In tragic accents "Go,"  
Then, Lydia, then . . . I still shall stay,  
And firmly answer — No.

#### TO AN INTRUSIVE BUTTERFLY

[1885.]

"Kill not — for Pity's sake — and lest ye slay  
The meanest thing upon its upward way."  
— Five Rules of Buddha.

I WATCH you through the garden walks,  
I watch you float between  
The avenues of dahlia stalks,  
And flicker on the green;  
You hover round the garden seat,  
You mount, you waver. Why, —  
Why storm us in our still retreat,  
O saffron Butterfly!

Across the room in loops of flight  
I watch you wayward go;  
Dance down a shaft of glancing light,  
Review my books a-row;  
Before the bust you flaunt and flit  
Of "blind Mæonides" —  
Ah, trifler, on his lips there lit  
Not butterflies, but bees!

You pause, you poise, you circle up  
Among my old Japan;  
You find a comrade on a cup,  
A friend upon a fan;  
You wind anon, a breathing-while,  
Around Amanda's brow; —  
Dost dream her then, O Volatile!  
E'en such an one as thou?

Away! Her thoughts are not as thine.  
A sterner purpose fills  
Her steadfast soul with deep design  
Of baby bows and frills;  
What care hath she for worlds without,  
What heed for yellow sun,  
Whose endless hopes revolve about  
A planet, *æstat* One.

Away! Tempt not the best of wives;  
Let not thy garish wing  
Come fluttering our Autumn lives  
With truant dreams of Spring!  
Away! Reseek thy "Flowery Land";  
Be Buddha's law obeyed;  
Lest Betty's undiscerning hand  
Should slay . . . a future Praed!

#### TO A MISSAL OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

[1885.]

MISSAL of the Gothic age,  
Missal with the blazoned page,  
Whence, O Missal, hither come,  
From what dim scriptorium?

Whose the name that wrought thee thus,  
Ambrose or Theophilus,  
Bending, through the waning light,  
O'er thy vellum scraped and white;

Weaving 'twixt thy rubric lines  
Sprays and leaves and quaint designs;  
Setting round thy border scrolled  
Buds of purple and of gold?

Ah! — a wondering brotherhood,  
Doubtless, by that artist stood,  
Raising o'er his careful ways  
Little choruses of praise;

Glad when his deft hand would paint  
Strife of Sathanas and Saint,  
Or in secret coign entwist  
Jest of cloister humourist.

Well the worker earned his wage,  
Bending o'er the blazoned page!  
Tired the hand and tired the wit  
Ere the final *Explicit*!

Not as ours the books of old —  
Things that steam can stamp and fold,  
Not as ours the books of yore —  
Rows of type, and nothing more.

Then a book was still a Book,  
Where a wistful man might look,  
Finding something through the whole,  
Beating, — like a human soul.

In that growth of day by day,  
When to labour was to pray,  
Surely something vital passed  
To the patient page at last;

Something that one still perceives  
Vaguely present in the leaves;  
Something from the worker lent;  
Something mute — but eloquent!

### A DIALOGUE

TO THE MEMORY OF MR. ALEXANDER POPE  
[1888.]

*"Non injussa cano."* — VIRG.

POET. I sing of POPE —

FRIEND. What, POPE, the *Twitnam Bard*,  
Whom *Dennis*, *Cibber*, *Tibbald* push'd so  
hard!  
Pope of the *Dunciad*! POPE who dar'd to  
woo,  
And then to libel, *Wortley-Montagu*!  
POPE of the *Ham-walks* story —

P. Scandals all!  
Scandals that now I care not to recall.  
Surely a little, in two hundred Years,  
One may neglect Contemporary Sneers: —  
Surely allowance for the Man may make  
That had all *Grub Street* yelping in his  
Wake!

And who (I ask you) has been never  
Mean,  
When urged by Envy, Anger or the Spleen?  
No: I prefer to look on POPE as one  
Not rightly happy till his Life was done;  
Whose whole Career, romance it as you  
please,

Was (what he call'd it) but a "long Dis-  
ease":

Think of his Lot, — his Pilgrimage of Pain,  
His "crazy Carcass" and his restless Brain;  
Think of his Night-Hours with their Feet  
of Lead,

His dreary Vigil and his aching Head;  
Think of all this, and marvel then to find  
The "crooked Body with a crooked Mind!"  
Nay rather, marvel that, in Fate's Despite,  
You find so much to solace and delight, —  
So much of Courage, and of Purpose high  
In that unequal Struggle *not* to die.

I grant you freely that POPE played his  
Part

Sometimes ignobly — but he lov'd his Art;  
I grant you freely that he sought his Ends  
Not always wisely — but he lov'd his  
Friends;

And who of Friends a nobler Roll could  
show —  
*Swift*, *St. John*, *Bathurst*, *Marchmont*,  
*Peterb'ro'*,  
*Arbuthnot* —

FR. ATTICUS?

P. Well (*entre nous*),  
Most that he said of *Addison* was true.  
Plain Truth you know —

FR. Is often not polite  
(So *Hamlet* thought) —

P. And *Hamlet* (Sir) was right.  
But leave *POPE*'s Life. To-day, methinks,  
we touch  
The Work too little and the Man too  
much.

Take up the *Lock*, the *Satires*, *Eloise* —  
What Art supreme, what Elegance, what  
Ease!

How keen the Irony, the Wit how bright,  
The Style how rapid, and the Verse how  
light!

Then read once more, and you shall wonder  
yet

At Skill, at Turn, at Point, at Epithet.  
"True Wit is Nature to Advantage  
dress'd" —

Was ever Thought so pithily express'd?  
"And ten low Words oft creep in one  
dull Line" —

Ah, what a Homily on Yours . . . and  
Mine!  
Or take — to choose at Random — take but  
This —

"Ten censure wrong for one that writes  
amiss."

FR. Pack'd and precise, no Doubt. Yet  
surely those  
Are but the Qualities we ask of Prose.  
Was he a POET?

P. Yes: if that be what  
*Byron* was certainly and *Bowles* was not;  
Or say you grant him, to come nearer Date,  
What *Dryden* had, that was denied to  
*Tate* —

FR. Which means, you claim for him  
the Spark divine,  
Yet scarce would place him on the highest  
Line —

P. True, there are Classes. POPE was  
most of all

Akin to *Horace*, *Persius*, *Juvenal*;  
POPE was, like them, the Censor of his Age,  
An Age more suited to Repose than Rage;  
When Rhyming turn'd from Freedom to  
the Schools,  
And shock'd with Licence, shudder'd into  
Rules;

When *Phæbus* touch'd the Poet's trembling Ear  
 With one supreme Commandment, *Be thou Clear;*  
 When Thought meant less to reason than compile,  
 And the *Muse* labour'd . . . chiefly with the File.  
 Beneath full Wigs no Lyric drew its Breath  
 As in the Days of great *ELIZABETH*;  
 And to the Bards of *ANNA* was denied  
 The Note that *Wordsworth* heard on *Dud-don-side*.  
 But Pope took up his Parable, and knit  
 The Woof of Wisdom with the Warp of Wit;  
 He trimm'd the Measure on its equal Feet,  
 And Smooth'd and fitted till the Line was neat;  
 He taught the Pause with due Effect to fall;  
 He taught the Epigram to come at Call;  
 He wrote —

FR. His *Iliad*!

P. Well, suppose you own  
 You like your *Iliad* in the Prose of *Bohn*, —  
 Tho' if you'd learn in Prose how *Homer* sang,  
 'Twere best to learn of *Butcher* and of *Lang*, —  
 Suppose you say your Worst of *POPE*, declare  
 His Jewels Paste, his Nature a Parterre,  
 His Art but Artifice — I ask once more  
 Where have you seen such Artifice before?  
 Where have you seen a Parterre better grac'd,  
 Or Gems that glitter like his Gems of Paste?  
 Where can you show, among your Names of Note,  
 So much to copy and so much to quote?  
 And where, in Fine, in all our English Verse,  
 A Style more trenchant and a Sense more terse?  
 So I, that love the old *Augustan Days*  
 Of formal Courtesies and formal Phrase;  
 That like along the finished Line to feel  
 The Ruffle's Flutter and the Flash of Steel;  
 That like my Couplet as compact as clear;  
 That like my Satire sparkling tho' severe,  
 Unmix'd with Bathos and unmarr'd by Trope,  
 I fling my Cap for Polish — and for *POPE*!

A POSTSCRIPT TO "RETALIATION"

[1897.]

[After the Fourth Edition of Dr. GOLDSMITH's RETALIATION was printed, the Publisher received a supplementary Epitaph on the Wit and Punster CALEB WHITEFOORD. Though it is found appended to the later issue of the Poem, it has been suspected that WHITEFOORD wrote it himself. It may be that the following which has recently come to light is another forgery.]

HERE JOHNSON is laid. Have a care how you walk;  
 If he stir in his sleep, in his sleep he will talk.  
 Ye gods! how he talk'd! What a torrent of sound,  
 His hearers invaded, encompass'd and — drown'd!  
 What a banquet of memory, fact, illustration,  
 In that innings-for-one that he call'd *conversation*!  
 Can't you hear his sonorous "Why no, Sir!" and "Stay, Sir!"  
 Your premiss is wrong," or "You don't see your way, Sir!"  
 How he silenc'd a prig, or a slipshod romancer!  
 How he pounct'd on a fool with a knock-me-down answer!  
 But peace to his slumbers! Tho' rough in the rind,  
 The heart of the giant was gentle and kind;  
 What signifies now, if in bouts with a friend,  
 When his pistol miss'd fire, he would use the butt-end?  
 If he trampled your flow'rs, like a bull in a garden,  
 What matter for that? he was sure to ask pardon;  
 And you felt on the whole, tho' he'd toss'd you and gor'd you,  
 It was something, at least, that he had not ignor'd you.  
 Yes! the outside was rugged. But test him within,  
 You found he had nought of the bear but the skin;  
 And for bottom and base to his *anfractuosity*,  
 A fund of fine feeling, good taste, generosity.  
 He was true to his conscience, his King, and his duty;  
 And he hated the *Whigs*, and he soften'd to Beauty.  
 Turn now to his Writings. I grant, in his tales,  
 That he made little fishes talk vastly like whales;

I grant that his language was rather emphatic,  
 Nay, even — to put the thing plainly — dogmatic;  
 But read him for Style, — and dismiss from your thoughts,  
 The crowd of compilers who copied his faults, —  
 Say, where is there English so full and so clear,  
 So weighty, so dignified, manly, sincere?  
 So strong in expression, conviction, persuasion?  
 So prompt to take colour from place and occasion?  
 So widely remov'd from the doubtful, the tentative;  
 So truly — and in the best sense — argumentative?  
 You may talk of your BURKES and your GIBBONS so clever;  
 But I hark back to him with a "JOHNSON forever!"  
 And I feel as I muse on his ponderous figure,  
 Tho' he's great in this age, in the next he'll grow bigger;  
 And still while . . . (*Cætera Desunt.*)

### THE WATER-CURE

A Tale: In the Manner of Prior  
 [1885.]

"— portentaque Thessala rides?" — HOR.  
 "— Thessalian portents do you flout?" —  
 CARDENIO's fortunes ne'er miscarried Until the day CARDENIO married.  
 What then? the Nymph no doubt was young?  
 She was: but yet — she had a tongue!  
 Most women have, you seem to say.  
 I grant it — in a different way.

'Twas not that organ half-divine, With which, Dear Friend, your spouse or mine,  
 What time we seek our nightly pillows, Rebukes our easy peccadilloes:  
 'Twas not so tuneful, so composing; 'Twas louder and less often dozing;  
 At *Ombre*, *Basset*, *Loo*, *Quadrille*, You heard it resonant and shrill;  
 You heard it rising, rising yet Beyond SELINDA's parroquet;  
 You heard it rival and outdo The chair-men and the link-boy too;  
 In short, wherever lungs perform, Like MARLBOROUGH, it rode the storm.

So uncontrolled it came to be CARDENIO feared his *chère amie*  
 (Like ECHO by Cephissus shore) Would turn to voice and nothing more.

That ('tis conceded) must be cured Which can't by practice be endured. CARDENIO, though he loved the maid, Grew daily more and more afraid; And since advice could not prevail (Reproof but seemed to fan the gale), A prudent man, he cast about To find some fitting nostrum out. What need to say that priceless drug Had not in any mine been dug? What need to say no skilful leech Could check that plethora of speech? Suffice it, that one lucky day CARDENIO tried — another way.

A Hermit (there were hermits then; The most accessible of men!) Near Vauxhall's sacred shade resided; In him, at length, our friend confided. (Simples, for show, he used to sell; But cast *Nativities* as well.) Consulted, he looked wondrous wise; Then undertook the enterprise.

What that might be, the Muse must spare:  
 To tell the truth, she was not there.  
 She scorns to patch what she ignores  
 With Similes and Metaphors;  
 And so, in short, to change the scene,  
 She slips a fortnight in between.

Behold our pair then (quite by chance!) In Vauxhall's garden of romance, — That paradise of nymphs and grottoes, Of fans, and fiddles, and ridottoes! What wonder if, the lamps reviewed, The song encored, the maze pursued, No further feat could seem more pat Than seek the Hermit after that? Who then more keen her fate to see Than this, the new LEUCONEE, On fire to learn the lore forbidden In Babylonian numbers hidden? Forthwith they took the darkling road To ALBUMAZAR his abode.

Arriving, they beheld the sage Intent on hieroglyphic page, In high Armenian cap arrayed, And girt with engines of his trade; (As Skeletons, and Spheres, and Cubes; As Amulets and Optic Tubes;) With dusky depths behind revealing Strange shapes that dangled from the ceiling; While more to palsy the beholder A Black Cat sat upon his shoulder.

The Hermit eyed the Lady o'er As one whose face he'd seen before; And then, with agitated looks, He fell to fumbling at his books.

CARDENIO felt his spouse was frightened, Her grasp upon his arm had tightened;

Judge then her horror and her dread  
When "Vox Stellarum" shook his head;  
Then darkly spake in phrase forlorn  
Of *Taurus* and of *Capricorn*;  
Of stars averse, and stars ascendant,  
And stars entirely independent;  
In fact, it seemed that all the Heavens  
Were set at sixes and at sevens,  
Portending, in her case, some fate  
Too fearful to prognosticate.

Meanwhile the Dame was well-nigh dead.  
"But is there naught," CARDENIO said,  
"No sign or token, Sage, to show  
From whence, or what, this dismal woe?"

The Sage, with circle and with plane,  
Betoak him to his charts again.  
"It vaguely seems to threaten Speech:  
No more (he said) the signs can teach."

But still CARDENIO tried once more:  
"Is there no potion in your store,  
No charm by *Chaldee* mage concerted  
By which this doom can be averted?"

The Sage, with motion doubly mystic,  
Resumed his juggling cabalistic.  
The aspects here again were various;  
But seemed to indicate *Aquarius*.  
Thereat portentously he frowned;  
Then frowned again, then smiled; — 'twas  
found;  
But 'twas too simple to be tried.  
"What is it, then?" at once they cried.

"Whene'er by chance you feel incited  
To speak at length, or uninvited;  
Whene'er you feel your tones grow shrill  
(At times, we know, the softest will!),  
This word oracular, my Daughter,  
Bids you to fill your mouth with water;  
Further, to hold it firm and fast,  
Until the danger be o'erpast."

The Dame, by this in part relieved,  
The prospect of escape perceived,  
Rebelled a little at the diet.  
CARDENIO said discreetly, "Try it,  
Try it, my Own. You have no choice,  
What if you lose your charming voice!"  
She tried, it seems. And whether then  
Some god stepped in, benign to men;  
Or Modesty, too long outlawed,  
Contrived to aid the pious fraud,  
I know not: — but from that same day  
She talked in quite a different way.

### ROSE-LEAVES

[1874.]

*Sans peser. — Sans rester.*

A Kiss

ROSE kissed me to-day.

Will she kiss me to-morrow?

Let it be as it may,

Rose kissed me to-day

But the pleasure gives way  
To a savour of sorrow; —  
Rose kissed me to-day, —  
*Will she kiss me to-morrow?*

### CIRCLE

In the School of Coquettes  
Madam Rose is a scholar: —  
O, they fish with all nets  
In the School of Coquettes!  
When her brooch she forgets  
'Tis to show her new collar;  
In the School of Coquettes  
Madam Rose is a scholar!

### A TEAR

There's a tear in her eye, —  
Such a clear little jewel!  
What can make her cry?  
There's a tear in her eye,  
"Puck has killed a big fly,  
And it's horribly cruel;"  
There's a tear in her eye, —  
Such a clear little jewel!

### A GREEK GIFT

Here's a present for Rose,  
How pleased she is looking!  
Is it verse? — is it prose?  
Here's a present for Rose!  
"Plats," "Entrées," and "Rôts," —  
Why, it's "Gouffé on Cooking,"  
Here's a present for Rose,  
How pleased she is looking!

### "URCEUS EXIT"

I intended an Ode,  
And it turned to a Sonnet.  
It began à la mode,  
I intended an Ode;  
But Rose crossed the road  
In her latest new bonnet;  
I intended an Ode;  
And it turned to a Sonnet.

### THE WANDERER

[1888.]

Love comes back to his vacant dwelling, —  
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!  
We see him stand by the open door,  
With his great eyes sad and his bosom  
swelling.

He makes as though in our arms repelling,  
He fain would lie as he lay before; —  
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling, —  
The old, old Love that we knew of yore!

Ah, who shall help us from over-spelling  
That sweet forgotten, forbidden lore!  
E'en as we doubt in our heart once more,  
With a rush of tears to our eyelids welling,  
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling.

## ON THE HURRY OF THIS TIME

[1885.]

WITH slower pen men used to write,  
Of old, when "letters" were "polite;"  
In ANNA's, or in GEORGE's days,  
They could afford to turn a phrase,  
Or trim a straggling theme aright.

They knew not steam; electric light  
Not yet had dazed their calmer sight;—  
They meted out both blame and praise  
With slower pen.

Too swiftly now the Hours take flight!  
What's read at morn is dead at night:  
Scant space have we for Art's delays,  
Whose breathless thought so briefly stays,  
We may not work—ah! would we might!—  
With slower pen.

## "WHEN BURBADGE PLAYED"

[1888.]

WHEN Burbadge played, the stage was bare  
Of fount and temple, tower and stair;  
Two backswords eked a battle out;  
Two supers made a rabble rout;  
The Throne of Denmark was a chair!

And yet, no less, the audience there  
Thrilled through all changes of Despair,  
Hope, Anger, Fear, Delight, and Doubt  
When Burbadge played!

This is the Actor's gift; to share  
All moods, all passions, nor to care  
One whit for scene, so he without  
Can lead men's minds the roundabout  
Stirred as of old those hearers were  
When Burbadge played!

## ON A NANKIN PLATE

[1888.]

"AH me, but it might have been!  
Was there ever so dismal a fate?"—  
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

"Such a maid as was never seen!  
She passed, tho' I cried to her 'Wait,'—  
Ah me, but it might have been!

"I cried, 'O my Flower, my Queen,  
Be mine!' 'Twas precipitate,"—  
Quoth the little blue mandarin, —

"But then . . . she was just sixteen,  
Long-eyed,—as a lily straight,—  
Ah me, but it might have been!

"As it was, from her palankeen,  
She laughed — 'You're a week too late!' "  
(Quoth the little blue mandarin.)

"That is why, in a mist of spleen,  
I mourn on this Nankin Plate.  
Ah me, but it might have been!"—  
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

ON A FAN THAT BELONGED TO  
THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR

[1888.]

CHICKEN-SKIN, delicate, white,  
Painted by Carlo Vanloo,  
Loves in a riot of light,  
Roses and vaporous blue;  
Hark to the dainty *frou-frou!*  
Picture above, if you can,  
Eyes that could melt as the dew,—  
This was the Pompadour's fan!

See how they rise at the sight,  
Thronging the *Œil de Bauf* through  
Courtiers as butterflies bright,  
Beauties that Fragonard drew,  
*Talon-rouge*, falbala, queue,  
Cardinal, Duke,—to a man,  
Eager to sigh or to sue,—  
This was the Pompadour's fan!

Ah, but things more than polite  
Hung on this toy, *voyez-vous!*  
Matters of state and of might,  
Things that great ministers do;  
Things that, maybe, overthrew  
Those in whose brains they began;  
Here was the sign and the cue,—  
This was the Pompadour's fan!

## ENVY

Where are the secrets it knew?  
Weavings of plot and of plan?  
— But where is the Pompadour, too?  
This was the Pompadour's Fan!

## A BALLAD OF ANTIQUARIES

[1881.]

THE days decay as flowers of grass,  
The years as silent waters flow;  
All things that are depart, alas!  
As leaves the winnowing breezes strow;  
And still while yet, full-orbed and slow,  
New suns the old horizon climb,  
Old Time must reap, as others sow;  
We are the gleaners after Time!

We garner all the things that pass,  
We harbour all the winds may blow;  
As misers we up-store, amass  
All gifts the hurrying Fates bestow;

Old chronicles of feast and show,  
Old waifs of by-gone rune and rhyme,  
Old jests that made old banquets glow:—  
We are the gleaners after Time!

We hoard old lore of lad and lass,  
Old flowers that in old gardens grow,  
Old records writ on tomb and brass,  
Old spoils of arrow-head and bow,

Old wrecks of old worlds' overthrow,  
Old relics of Earth's primal slime,  
All drift that wanders to and fro:—  
We are the gleaners after Time!

ENVOY

Friends, that we know not and we know!  
We pray you, by this Christmas chime,  
Help us to save the things that go:  
We are the gleaners after Time!

# RUDYARD KIPLING

(1865—)

## L'ENVOI

(From LIFE'S HANDICAP)

My new-cut ashlar takes the light  
Where crimson-blank the windows flare;  
By my own work, before the night,  
Great Overseer, I make my prayer.

If there be good in that I wrought,  
Thy hand compelled it, Master, Thine;  
Where I have failed to meet Thy thought  
I know, through Thee, the blame is mine.

One instant's toil to Thee denied  
Stands all Eternity's offence,  
Of that I did with Thee to guide  
To Thee, through Thee, be excellence.

Who, lest all thought of Eden fade,  
Bring'st Eden to the craftsman's brain,  
Godlike to muse o'er his own trade  
And Manlike stand with God again.

The depth and dream of my desire,  
The bitter paths wherein I stray,  
Thou knowest Who hast made the Fire,  
Thou knowest Who hast made the Clay.

One stone the more swings to her place  
In that dread Temple of Thy Worth —  
It is enough that through Thy grace  
I saw naught common on Thy earth.

Take not that vision from my ken;  
Oh whatso'er may spoil or speed,  
Help me to need no aid from men  
That I may help such men as need!

## MANDALAY

(From BARRACK ROOM BALLADS.)

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin'  
eastward to the sea,  
There's a Burma girl a-settin', and I know  
she thinks o' me;  
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the  
temple-bells they say:  
"Come you back, you British soldier; come  
you back to Mandalay!"

Come you back to Mandalay,  
Where the old Flotilla lay:  
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin'  
from Rangoon to Mandalay?  
On the road to Mandalay,  
Where the flyin'-fishes play,  
An' the dawn comes up like thunder  
outer China 'crost the Bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap  
was green,  
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat — jes' the  
same as Theebaw's Queen,  
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin'  
white cheroot,  
An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an  
'eathen idol's foot:

Bloomin' idol made o' mud —  
Wot they called the Great Gawd  
Budd —  
Plucky lot she cared for idols when  
I kissed 'er where she stud!  
On the road to Mandalay . . .

When the mist was on the rice-fields an'  
the sun was droppin' slow  
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing  
"Kulla-lo-lo!"  
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er  
cheek agin my cheek  
We useter watch the steamers an' the  
hathis pilin' teak.

Elephints a-pilin' teak  
In the sludgy, squddy creek,  
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you  
was 'arf afraid to speak!  
On the road to Mandalay . . .

But that's all shove be'ind me — long ago  
an' fur away,  
An' there ain't no 'usses runnin' from the  
Bank to Mandalay;  
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the  
ten-year soldier tells:  
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you  
won't never 'eed naught else."

No! you won't 'eed nothin' else  
But them spicy garlic smells,  
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees  
an' the tinkly temple-bells;  
On the road to Mandalay . . .

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty  
pavin'-stones,  
An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the  
fever in my bones;  
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer  
Chelsea to the Strand,  
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do  
they understand?

Beefy face an' grubby 'and —  
 Law! wot do they understand?  
 I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a  
 cleaner, greener land!  
 On the road to Mandalay . . .

Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where  
 the best is like the worst,  
 Where there aren't no Ten Commandments  
 an' a man can raise a thirst;  
 For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's  
 there that I would be —  
 By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking  
 lazy at the sea;

On the road to Mandalay,  
 Where the old Flotilla lay,  
 With our sick beneath the awnings  
 when we went to Mandalay!  
 O the road to Mandalay!  
 Where the flyin'-fishes play,  
 An' the dawn comes up like thunder  
 outer China 'crost the Bay!

TOMLINSON  
 (From SERVICE SONGS.)

1891

Now Tomlinson gave up the ghost in his  
 house in Berkeley Square,  
 And a Spirit came to his bedside and  
 gripped him by the hair —  
 A Spirit gripped him by the hair and  
 carried him far away,  
 Till he heard as the roar of a rain-fed  
 ford the roar of the Milky Way:  
 Till he heard the roar of the Milky Way  
 die down and drone and cease,  
 And they came to the Gate within the  
 Wall where Peter holds the keys.  
 "Stand up, stand up now, Tomlinson, and  
 answer loud and high  
 "The good that ye did for the sake of men  
 or ever ye came to die —  
 "The good that ye did for the sake of  
 men in little earth so lone!"  
 And the naked soul of Tomlinson grew  
 white as a rain-washed bone.  
 "O I have a friend on earth," he said,  
 "that was my priest and guide,  
 "And well would he answer all for me if  
 he were by my side."  
 —"For that ye strove in neighbour-love it  
 shall be written fair,  
 "But now ye wait at Heaven's Gate and  
 not in Berkeley Square:  
 "Though we called your friend from his  
 bed this night, he could not speak for  
 you,  
 "For the race is run by one and one and  
 never by two and two."

Then Tomlinson looked up and down, and  
 little gain was there,  
 For the naked stars grinned overhead, and  
 he saw that his soul was bare:  
 The Wind that blows between the Worlds,  
 it cut him like a knife,  
 And Tomlinson took up the tale and spoke  
 of his good in life.  
 "Oh this I have read in a book," he said,  
 "and that was told to me,  
 "And this I have thought that another man  
 thought of a Prince in Muscovy."  
 The good souls flocked like homing doves  
 and bade him clear his path,  
 And Peter twirled the jangling keys in  
 weariness and wrath.  
 "Ye have read, ye have heard, ye have  
 thought," he said, "and the tale is yet  
 to run:  
 "By the worth of the body that once ye  
 had, give answer — what ha' ye done?"  
 Then Tomlinson looked back and forth,  
 and little good it bore,  
 For the Darkness stayed at his shoulder-blade  
 and Heaven's Gate before: —  
 "Oh this I have felt, and this I have  
 guessed, and this I have heard men  
 say,  
 "And this they wrote that another man  
 wrote of a carl in Norroway."  
 "Ye have read, ye have felt, ye have  
 guessed, good luck! Ye have hampered  
 Heaven's Gate;  
 "There's little room between the stars in  
 idleness to prate!  
 "O none may reach by hired speech of  
 neighbour, priest, and kin  
 "Through borrowed deed to God's good  
 meed that lies so fair within;  
 "Get hence, get hence to the Lord of  
 Wrong, for doom has yet to run,  
 "And . . . the faith that ye share with  
 Berkeley Square uphold you, Tomlinson!"

The Spirit gripped him by the hair, and  
 sun by sun they fell  
 Till they came to the belt of Naughty  
 Stars that rim the mouth of Hell:  
 The first are red with pride and wrath, the  
 next are white with pain,  
 But the third are black with clinkered  
 sin that cannot burn again:  
 They may hold their path, they may leave  
 their path, and never a soul to mark,  
 They may burn or freeze, but they must  
 not cease in the Scorn of the Outer  
 Dark.  
 The Wind that blows between the Worlds,  
 it nipped him to the bone,  
 And he yearned to the flare of Hell-gate  
 there as the light of his own hearth-stone.

The Devil he sat behind the bars, where  
the desperate legions drew,  
But he caught the hasting Tomlinson and  
would not let him through.  
"Wot ye the price of good pit-coal that  
I must pay?" said he,  
"That ye rank yoursel' so fit for Hell and  
ask no leave of me?  
"I am all o'er-sib to Adam's breed that ye  
should give me scorn,  
"For I strove with God for your First  
Father the day that he was born.  
"Sit down, sit down upon the slag, and  
answer loud and high  
"The harm that ye did to the Sons of Men  
or ever you came to die."  
And Tomlinson looked up and up, and  
saw against the night  
The belly of a tortured star blood-red in  
Hell-Mouth light;  
And Tomlinson looked down and down,  
and saw beneath his feet  
The frontlet of a tortured star milk-white in  
Hell-Mouth heat.  
"O I had a love on earth," said he, "that  
kissed me to my fall,  
"And if ye would call my love to me I  
know she would answer all."  
—"All that ye did in love forbidding it shall  
be written fair,  
"But now ye wait at Hell-Mouth Gate and  
not in Berkeley Square:  
"Though we whistled your love from her  
bed to-night, I trow she would not  
run,  
"For the sin ye do by two and two ye must  
pay for one by one!"  
The Wind that blows between the World's,  
it cut him like a knife,  
And Tomlinson took up the tale and spoke  
of his sin in life:—  
"Once I ha' laughed at the power of Love  
and twice at the grip of the Grave,  
"And thrice I ha' patted my God on the  
head that men might call me brave."  
The Devil he blew 'on a brandered soul  
and set it aside to cool:  
"Do ye think I would waste my good pit-  
coal on the hide of a brain-sick fool?  
"I see no worth in the hobnailed mirth or  
the jolthead jest ye did  
"That I should waken my gentlemen that  
are sleeping three on a grid."  
Then Tomlinson looked back and forth, and  
there was little grace,  
For Hell-Gate filled the houseless Soul  
with the Fear of Naked Space.  
"Nay, this I ha' heard," quo' Tomlinson,  
"and this was noised abroad,  
"And this I ha' got from a Belgian book  
on the word of a dead French lord."  
—"Ye ha' heard, we ha' read, ye ha' got,  
good lack! and the tale begins afresh—

"Have ye sinned one sin for the pride o'  
the eye or the sinful lust of the flesh?"  
Then Tomlinson he gripped the bars and  
yammered, "Let me in—  
"For I mind that I borrowed my neighbour's wife to sin the deadly sin."  
The Devil he grinned behind the bars, and  
banked the fires high:  
"Did ye read of that sin in a book?" said  
he; and Tomlinson said "Ay!"  
The Devil he blew upon his nails, and the  
little devils ran,  
And he said, "Go husk this whimpering  
thief that comes in the guise of a man:  
"Winnow him out 'twixt star and star, and  
sieve his proper worth:  
"There's sore decline in Adam's line if  
this be spawn of earth."  
Empusa's crew, so naked-new they may  
not face the fire,  
But weep that they bin too small to sin  
to the height of their desire,  
Over the coal they chased the Soul, and  
racked it all abroad,  
As children rifle a caddis-case or the  
raven's foolish hoard.  
And back they came with the tattered  
Thing, as children after play,  
And they said: "The soul that he got  
from God he has bartered clean away.  
"We have threshed a stool of print and  
book, and winnowed a chattering wind  
"And many a soul wherefrom he stole,  
but his we cannot find:  
"We have handled him, we have dandled  
him, we have seared him to the bone;  
"And sure if tooth and nail show truth  
he has no soul of his own."  
The Devil he bowed his head on his breast  
and rumbled deep and low:—  
"I'm all o'er-sib to Adam's breed that I  
should bid him go.  
"Yet close we lie, and deep we lie, and if I  
gave him place,  
"My gentlemen that are so proud would  
flout me to my face;  
"They'd call my house a common stews  
and me a careless host,  
"And—I would not anger my gentlemen  
for the sake of a shiftless ghost."  
The Devil he looked at the mangled Soul  
that prayed to feel the flame,  
And he thought of Holy Charity, but he  
thought of his own good name:—  
"Now ye could haste my coal to waste, and  
sit ye down to fry:  
"Did ye think of that theft for yourself?"  
said he; and Tomlinson said "Ay!"  
The Devil he blew an outward breath, for  
his heart was free from care:—  
"Ye have scarce the soul of a louse," he  
said, "but the roots of sin are there,

"And for that sin should ye come in were  
I the lord alone.  
"But sinful pride has rule inside—and  
mightier than my own.  
"Honour and Wit; fore-damned they sit,  
to each his Priest and Whore:  
"Nay, scarce I dare myself go there, and  
you they'd torture sore.  
"Ye are neither spirit nor spirk," he said;  
"ye are neither book nor brute—  
"Go, get ye back to the flesh again for  
the sake of Man's repute.  
"I'm all o'er-sib to Adam's breed that I  
should mock your pain,  
"But look that ye win to worthier sin ere  
ye come back again.  
"Get hence, the hearse is at your door—  
the grim black stallions wait—  
"They bear your clay to place to-day.  
Speed, lest ye come too late!  
"Go back to Earth with a lip unsealed—  
go back with an open eye.  
"And carry my word to the Sons of Men  
or ever ye come to die:  
"That the sin they do by two and two they  
must pay for one by one—  
"And . . . the God that you took from a  
printed book be with you, Tomlinson!"

## THE LAST CHANTEY

1892

"And there was no more sea."

THUS saith the Lord in the Vault above  
the Cherubim,  
Calling to the Angels and the Souls in  
their degree:  
"Lo! Earth has passed away  
On the smoke of Judgment Day.  
That Our word may be established shall We  
gather up the sea?"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly  
mariners:  
"Plague upon the hurricane that made us  
furl and flee!  
But the war is done between us,  
In the deep the Lord hath seen us—  
Our bones we'll leave the barracout', and  
God may sink the sea!"

Then said the soul of Judas that betrayed  
Him:  
"Lord, hast Thou forgotten Thy cov-  
enant with me?  
How once a year I go  
To cool me on the floe?  
And Ye take my day of mercy if Ye take  
away the sea!"

Then said the soul of the Angel of the Off-  
shore Wind:  
(He that bits the thunder when the bull-  
mouthing breakers flee):

"I have watch and ward to keep  
O'er Thy wonders on the deep,  
And Ye take mine honour from me if Ye  
take away the sea!"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mar-  
iners:  
"Nay, but we were angry, and a hasty  
folk are we!  
If we worked the ship together  
Till she foundered in foul weather,  
Are we babes that we should clamour for  
a vengeance on the sea?"

Then said the souls of the slaves that men  
threw overboard:  
"Kennelled in the picaroon a weary band  
were we;  
But Thy arm was strong to save,  
And it touched us on the wave,  
And we drowded the long tides idle till  
Thy Trumpets tore the sea."

Then cried the soul of the stout Apostle  
Paul to God:  
"Once we frapped a ship, and she  
laboured woundily.  
There were fourteen score of these,  
And they blessed Thee on their knees,  
When they learned Thy Grace and Glory  
under Malta-by the sea!"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mar-  
iners,  
Plucking at their harps, and they plucked  
unhandily:  
"Our thumbs are rough and tarred,  
And the tune is something hard—  
May we lift a Deepsea Chantey such as  
seamen use at sea?"

Then said the souls of the gentlemen-  
adventurers—  
Fettered wrist to bar all for red iniquity:  
"Ho, we revel in our chains  
O'er the sorrow that was Spain's;  
Heave or sink it, leave or drink it, we were  
masters of the sea!"

Up spake the soul of a gray Gothavn 'speck-  
shiner—  
(He that led the flinching in the fleets of  
fair Dundee):  
"Oh, the ice-blink white and near,  
And the bowhead breaching clear!  
Will Ye whelm them all for wantonness  
that wallow in the sea?"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mar-  
iners,  
Crying: "Under Heaven, here is neither  
lead nor lee!  
Must we sing for evermore  
On the windless, glassy floor?  
Take back your golden fiddles and we'll  
beat to open sea!"

Then stooped the Lord, and He called the  
good sea up to Him,  
And 'stablished His borders unto all  
eternity,

That such as have no pleasure  
For to praise the Lord by measure,  
They may enter into galleons and serve  
Him on the sea.

*Sun, wind, and cloud shall fail not from  
the face of it,  
Stinging, ringing spindrift, nor the ful-  
mar flying free;  
And the ships shall go abroad  
To the Glory of the Lord  
Who heard the silly sailor-folk and gave  
them back their sea!*

## THE SONG OF THE BANJO

1894

You couldn't pack a Broadwood half a  
mile—  
You mustn't leave a fiddle in the damp—  
You couldn't raft an organ up the Nile,  
And play it in an Equatorial swamp.  
*I travel with the cooking-pots and pails—  
I'm sandwiched 'tween the coffee and the  
pork—  
And when the dusty column checks and  
tails,  
You should hear me spur the rearguard  
to a walk!*

With my "Pilly-willy-winky-winky popp!"  
[Oh, it's any tune that comes into my  
head!] So I keep 'em moving forward till they  
drop;  
So I play 'em up to water and to bed.

In the silence of the camp before the fight,  
When it's good to make your will and  
say your prayer,  
You can hear my *strumpty-tumpty* over-  
night,  
Explaining ten to one was always fair.  
I'm the Prophet of the Utterly Absurd,  
Of the Patently Impossible and Vain—  
And when the Thing that Couldn't has oc-  
curred,  
Give me time to change my leg and go  
again.

With my "Tumpa - tumpa - tumpa - tum - pa  
tump!" In the desert where the dung-fed camp-  
smoke curled.  
There was never voice before us till I led  
our lonely chorus,  
I—the war-drum of the White Man  
round the world!

By the bitter road the Younger Son must  
tread,  
Ere he win to hearth and saddle of his  
own,—

'Mid the riot of the shearers at the shed,  
In the silence of the herder's hut alone—  
In the twilight, on the bucket upside down,  
Hear me babble what the weakest won't  
confess—

I am Memory and Torment—I am Town!  
I am all that ever went with evening  
dress!

With my "Tunk-a tunka-tunka-tunka tunk!"  
[So the lights—the London Lights—  
grow near and plain!] So I rowel 'em afresh towards the Devil  
and the Flesh,  
Till I bring my broken rankers home  
again.

In desire of many marvels over sea,  
Where the new-raised tropic city sweats  
and roars,  
I have sailed with Young Ulysses from the  
quay  
Till the anchor rumbled down on stranger  
shores.

He is bleded to the open and the sky,  
He is taken in a snare that shall not fail,  
He shall hear me singing strongly, till he  
die,  
Like the shouting of a backstay in a gale.

With my "Hya! Heeya! Heeya! Hullah!  
Haul!" [O the green that thunders aft along the  
deck!] Are you sick o' towns and men? You  
must sign and sail again,  
For it's "Johnny Bowlegs, pack your kit  
and trek!"

Through the gorge that gives the stars at  
noonday clear—  
Up the pass that packs the scud beneath  
our wheel—  
Round the bluff that sinks her thousand  
fathom sheer—  
Down the valley with our guttering  
brakes asqueal:

Where the trestle groans and quivers in  
the snow,  
Where the many-shedded levels loop and  
twine,  
Hear me lead my reckless children from  
below  
Till we sing the Song of Roland to the  
pine.

With my "Tinka-tinka-tinka-tinka-tink!"  
[Oh the axe has cleared the mountain,  
croup and crest!]

And we ride the iron stallions down to drink,  
Through the cañons to the waters of the West!

And the tunes that mean so much to you alone—

Common tunes that make you choke and blow your nose,  
Vulgar tunes that bring the laugh that brings the groan—

I can rip your very heartstrings out with those;

With the feasting, and the folly, and the fun—

And the lying, and the lusting, and the drink,

And the merry play that drops you, when you're done,

To the thoughts that burn like irons if you think.

With my "Plunka-lunka-lunka-lunka-lunk!"

Here's a trifle on account of pleasure past,  
Ere the wit that made you win gives you eyes to see your sin

And—the heavier repentance at the last!

Let the organ moan her sorrow to the roof—I have told the naked stars the Grief of Man.

Let the trumpets snare the foeman to the proof—I have known Defeat, and mocked it as we ran!

My bray ye may not alter nor mistake  
When I stand to jeer the fatted Soul of Things,

But the Song of Lost Endeavour that I make,  
Is it hidden in the twanging of the strings?

With my "Ta-ra-rara-rara-ra-ra-rrp!"  
[Is it naught to you that hear and pass me by?]

But the word—the word is mine, when the order moves the line  
And the lean, locked ranks go roaring down to die!

The grandam of my grandam was the Lyre—

[O the blue below the little fisher-huts!] That the Stealer stooping beachward filled with fire,  
Till she bore my iron head and ringing guts!

By the wisdom of the centuries I speak—  
To the tune of yestermorn I set the truth—

I, the joy of life unquestioned—I, the Greek—

I, the everlasting Wonder Song of Youth!

With my "Tinka-tinka-tinka-tinka-tink!"  
[What d' ye lack, my noble masters?  
What d' ye lack?]

So I draw the world together link by link:  
Yea, from Delos up to Limerick and back!

### ANCHOR SONG

1893

HEH! Walk her round. Heave, ah, heave her short again!

Over, snatch her over, there, and hold her on the pawl.

Loose all sail, and brace your yards back and full—

Ready jib to pay her off and heave short all!

Well, ah, fare you well; we can stay no more with you, my love—

Down, set down your liquor and your girl from off your knee;

For the wind has come to say:

"You must take me while you may,  
If you'd go to Mother Carey,

(Walk her down to Mother Carey!),  
Oh, we're bound to Mother Carey

where she feeds her chicks at sea!"

Heh! Walk her round. Break, ah break it out o' that!

Break our starboard-bower out, apeak, awash, and clear.

Port—port she casts, with the harbour-mud beneath her foot,

And that's the last o' bottom we shall see this year!

Well, ah, fare you well, for we've got to take her out again—

Take her out in ballast, riding light and cargo-free.

And it's time to clear and quit

When the hawser grips the bitt,  
So we'll pay you with the foresheet and a promise from the sea!

Heh! Tally on. Aft and walk away with her!

Handsome to the cathead, now; O tally on the fall!

Stop, seize and fish, and easy on the davit-guy.

Up, well up the fluke of her, and in-board haul!

Well, ah, fare you well, for the Channel wind's took hold of us,

Choking down our voices as we snatch the gaskets free.

And it's blowing up for night,

And she's dropping light on light,  
And she's snorting and she's snatching for a breath of open sea!

Wheel, full and by; but she'll smell her road alone to-night.

Sick she is and harbour-sick—O sick to clear the land!

Roll down to Brest with the old Red Ensign over us—

Carry on and thrash her out with all she'll stand!

Well, ah, fare you well, and it's Ushant slams the door on us.

Whirling like a windmill through the dirty scud to lee:

Till the last, last flicker goes  
From the tumbling water-rows,  
And we're off to Mother Carey  
(Walk her down to Mother Carey!),  
Oh, we're bound for Mother Carey  
where she feeds her chicks at sea!

### SESTINA OF THE TRAMP-ROYAL

1896

SPEAKIN' in general, I 'ave tried 'em all—  
The 'appy roads that take you o'er the world.

Speakin' in general, I 'ave found them good

For such as cannot use one bed too long.  
But must get 'ence, the same as I 'ave done,

An' go observin' matters till they die.

What do it matter where or 'ow we die,  
So long as we've our 'ealth to watch it all—

The different ways that different things are done,

An' men an' women lovin' in this world;  
Takin' our chances as they come along,  
An' when they ain't, pretendin' they are good?

In cash or credit—no, it are n't no good;  
You 'ave to 'ave the 'abit or you'd die,  
Unless you lived your life 'but one day long,

Nor didn't prophesy nor fret at all,  
But drew your tucker some'ow from the world,  
An' never bothered what you might ha' done.

But, Gawd, what things are they I 'aven't done!

I've turned my 'and to most, an' turned it good,

In various situations round the world—  
For 'im that doth not work must surely die;

But that's no reason man should labour all

'Is life on one same shift; life's none so long.

Therefore, from job to job I've moved along.

Pay couldn't 'old me when my time was done,

For something in my 'ead upset me all,  
Till I 'ad dropped whatever 't was for good,

An', out at sea, be'eld the dock-lights die,  
An' met my mate—the wind that tramps the world.

It's like a book, I think, this bloomin' world,'

Which you can read and care for just so long,

But presently you feel that you will die  
Unless you get the page you're readin' done,

An' turn another—likely not so good;  
But what you're after is to turn 'em all.

Gawd bless this world! Whatever she 'ath done—

Excep' when awful long—I've found it good.

So write, before I die, "'E liked it all!"

### RECESSATIONAL

(From SERVICE SONGS.)

1897

Gon of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine—

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The captains and the kings depart:

Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire:

Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!

Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,

Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the Law—

Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust

In reeking tube and iron shard,  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,

And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
For frantic boast and foolish word—

Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

# ERNEST DOWSON

(1867-1900)

VITAE SUMMA BREVIS SPEM NOS  
VETAT INCOHARE LONGAM

[1896.]

THEY are not long, the weeping and the  
laughter,  
Love and desire and hate:  
I think they have no portion in us after  
We pass the gate.  
  
They are not long, the days of wine and  
roses:  
Out of a misty dream  
Our path emerges for a while, then closes  
Within a dream.

## NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION

[1899.]

CALM, sad, secure; behind high convent  
walls,  
These watch the sacred lamp, these watch  
and pray:  
And it is one with them when evening  
falls,  
And one with them the cold return of  
day.  
  
These heed not time; their nights and  
days they make  
Into a long, returning rosary,  
Whereon their lives are threaded for  
Christ's sake;  
Meekness and vigilance and chastity.

A vowed patrol, in silent companies,  
Life-long they keep before the living  
Christ.  
In the dim church, their prayers and pen-  
ances  
Are fragrant incense to the Sacrificed.

Outside, the world is wild and passionate;  
Man's weary laughter and his sick de-  
spair  
Entreat at their impenetrable gate:  
They heed no voices in their dream of  
prayer.

They saw the glory of the world dis-  
played;  
They saw the bitter of it, and the sweet;  
They knew the roses of the world should  
fade,  
And be trod under by the hurrying feet.

Therefore they rather put away desire,  
And crossed their hands and came to  
sanctuary  
And veiled their heads and put on coarse  
attire:  
Because their comeliness was vanity.  
  
And there they rest; they have serene  
insight  
Of the illuminating dawn to be:  
Mary's sweet Star dispels for them the  
night,  
The proper darkness of humanity.  
  
Calm, sad, secure; with faces worn and  
mild:  
Surely their choice of vigil is the best?  
Yea! for our roses fade, the world is  
wild;  
But there, beside the altar, there, is rest.

## AMOR PROFANUS

[1896.]

BEYOND the pale of memory,  
In some mysterious dusky grove;  
A place of shadows utterly,  
Where never coos the turtle-dove,  
A world forgotten of the sun:  
I dreamed we met when day was done,  
And marvelled at our ancient love.

Met there by chance, long kept apart,  
We wandered through the darkling glades;  
And that old language of the heart  
We sought to speak: alas! poor shades!  
Over our pallid lips had run  
The waters of oblivion,  
Which crown all loves of men or maids.

In vain we stammered: from afar  
Our old desire shone cold and dead:  
That time was distant as a star,  
When eyes were bright and lips were red.  
And still we went with downcast eye  
And no delight in being nigh,  
Poor shadows most uncomforted.

Ah, Lalage! while life is ours,  
Hoard not thy beauty rose and white,  
But pluck the pretty, fleeting flowers  
That deck our little path of light:  
For all too soon we twain shall tread  
The bitter pastures of the dead:  
Estranged, sad spectres of the night.

YVONNE OF BRITTANY  
[1896.]

In your mother's apple-orchard,  
Just a year ago, last spring:  
Do you remember, Yvonne!  
The dear trees lavishing  
Rain of their starry blossoms  
To make you a coronet?  
Do you remember, Yvonne?  
As I remember yet.

In your mother's apple-orchard,  
When the world was left behind:  
You were shy, so shy, Yvonne!  
But your eyes were calm and kind.  
We spoke of the apple harvest,  
When the cider press is set,  
And such-like trifles, Yvonne!  
That doubtless you forgot.

In the still, soft Breton twilight,  
We were silent; words were few,  
Till your mother came out chiding,  
For the grass was bright with dew:  
But I know your heart was beating,  
Like a fluttered, frightened dove.  
Do you ever remember, Yvonne?  
That first faint flush of love?

In the fulness of midsummer,  
When the apple-bloom was shed,  
Oh, brave was your surrender,  
Though shy the words you said.  
I was so glad, so glad, Yvonne!  
To have led you home at last;  
Do you ever remember, Yvonne?  
How swiftly the days passed?

In your mother's apple-orchard  
It is grown too dark to stray,  
There is none to chide you, Yvonne!  
You are over far away.  
There is dew on your grave grass, Yvonne!  
But your feet it shall not wet:  
No, you never remember, Yvonne!  
And I shall soon forget.

BENEDICTIO DOMINI  
[1896.]

WITHOUT, the sullen noises of the street!  
The voice of London, inarticulate,  
Hoarse and blaspheming, surges in to meet  
The silent blessing of the Immaculate.

Dark is the church, and dim the worshippers,  
Hushed with bowed heads as though by  
some old spell,  
While through the incense-laden air there  
stirs  
The admonition of a silver bell.

Dark is the church, save where the altar  
stands,  
Dressed like a bride, illustrious with  
light,  
Where one old priest exalts with tremulous  
hands  
The one true solace of man's fallen  
plight.

Strange silence here: without, the sounding  
street  
Heralds the world's swift passage to the  
fire:  
O Benediction, perfect and complete!  
When shall men cease to suffer and de-  
sire?

NON SUM QUALIS ERAM BONAE  
SUB REGNO CYNARAE  
[1896.]

LAST night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her  
lips and mine  
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath  
was shed  
Upon my soul between the kisses and the  
wine;  
And I was desolate and sick of an old  
passion,  
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:  
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my  
fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm  
heart beat,  
Night-long within mine arms in love and  
sleep she lay;  
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth  
were sweet;  
But I was desolate and sick of an old  
passion,  
When I awoke and found the dawn was  
gray:  
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in  
my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the  
wind,  
Flung roses, roses riotously with the  
throng,  
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of  
mind;  
But I was desolate and sick of an old  
passion,  
Yea, all the time, because the dance was  
long:  
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my  
fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger  
wine,  
But when the feast is finished and the  
lamps expire,  
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night  
is thine;

And I am desolate and sick of an old  
passion,  
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:  
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in  
my fashion.

## SPLEEN

[1896.]

I WAS not sorrowful, I could not weep,  
And all my memories were put to sleep.

I watched the river grow more white and  
strange,  
All day till evening I watched it change.

All day till evening I watched the rain  
Beat wearily upon the window pane.

I was not sorrowful, but only tired  
Of everything that ever I desired.

Her lips, her eyes, all day became to me  
The shadow of a shadow utterly.

All day mine hunger for her heart became  
Oblivion, until the evening came,

And left me sorrowful, inclined to weep,  
With all my memories that could not sleep.

YOU WOULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD  
ME

Ah, dans ces mornes séjours  
Les jamais sont les toujours

PAUL VERLAINE.

[1896.]

You would have understood me, had you  
waited;  
I could have loved you, dear! as well  
as he:  
Had we not been impatient, dear! and  
fated

Always to disagree.

What is the use of speech? Silence were  
fitter:  
Lest we should still be wishing things  
unsaid.  
Though all the words we ever spake were  
bitter,

Shall I reproach you dead?

Nay, let this earth, your portion, likewise  
cover  
All the old anger, setting us apart:  
Always, in all, in truth was I your lover;  
Always, I held your heart.

I have met other women who were tender,  
As you were cold, dear! with a grace as  
rare.  
Think you, I turned to them, or made  
surrender,  
I who had found you fair?

Had we been patient, dear! ah, had you  
waited,  
I had fought death for you, better than  
he:  
But from the very first, dear! we were  
fated

Always to disagree.

Late, late, I come to you, now death dis-  
closes

Love that in life was not to be our  
part:  
On your low lying mound between the  
roses,

Sadly I cast my heart.

I would not waken you: nay! this is fitter;  
Death and the darkness give you unto  
me;

Here we who loved so, were so cold and  
bitter,

Hardly can disagree.

## VAIN RESOLVES

[1896.]

I SAID: "There is an end of my desire:  
Now have I sown, and I have harvested,  
And these are ashes of an ancient fire,  
Which, verily, shall not be quickened.  
Now will I take me to a place of peace,  
Forget mine heart's desire;  
In solitude and prayer, work out my soul's  
release.

"I shall forget her eyes, how cold they  
were;  
Forget her voice, how soft it was and  
low,  
With all my singing that she did not hear,  
And all my service that she did not  
know.

I shall not hold the merest memory  
Of any days that were,  
Within those solitudes where I will fasten  
me."

And once she passed, and once she raised  
her eyes,  
And smiled for courtesy, and nothing  
said:  
And suddenly the old flame did arise,  
And all my dead desire was quickened.  
Yea! as it hath been, it shall ever be,  
Most passionless, pure eyes!  
Which never shall grow soft, nor change,  
nor pity me.

## IMPENITENTIA ULTIMA

[1896.]

BEFORE my light goes out for ever if God  
should give me a choice of graces,  
I would not reck of length of days, nor  
crave for things to be;

But cry: "One day of the great lost days,  
one face of all the faces,  
Grant me to see and touch once more  
and nothing more to see.

"For, Lord, I was free of all Thy flowers,  
but I chose the world's sad roses,  
And that is why my feet are torn and  
mine eyes are blind with sweat,  
But at Thy terrible judgment-seat, when  
this my tired life closes,  
I am ready to reap whereof I sowed,  
and pay my righteous debt.

"But once before the sand is run and the  
silver thread is broken,  
Give me a grace and cast aside the veil of  
dolorous years,  
Grant me one hour of all mine hours, and  
let me see for a token  
Her pure and pitiful eyes shine out, and  
bathe her feet with tears."

Her pitiful hands should calm, and her hair  
stream down and blind me,  
Out of the sight of night, and out of  
the reach of fear,  
And her eyes should be my light whilst  
the sun went out behind me,  
And the viols in her voice be the last  
sound in mine ear.

Before the ruining waters fall and my life  
be carried under,  
And Thine anger cleave me through as  
a child cuts down a flower,  
I will praise Thee, Lord in Hell, while my  
limbs are racked asunder,  
For the last sad sight of her face and  
the little grace of an hour.

### CARTHUSIANS

THROUGH what long heaviness, assayed in  
what strange fire,  
Have these white monks been brought  
into the way of peace,  
Despising the world's wisdom and the  
world's desire,  
Which from the body of this death  
bring no release?

Within their austere walls no voices pen-  
etrate;  
A sacred silence only, as of death, ob-  
tains;  
Nothing finds entry here of loud or pas-  
sionate;  
This quiet is the exceeding profit of  
their pains.

From many lands they came, in divers fiery  
ways;  
Each knew at last the vanity of earthly  
joys;

And one was crowned with thorns, and  
one was crowned with bays,  
And each was tired at last of the world's  
foolish noise.

It was not theirs with Dominic to preach  
God's holy wrath,  
They were too stern to bear sweet Fran-  
cis' gentle sway;  
Theirs was a higher calling and a steeper  
path,  
To dwell alone with Christ, to meditate  
and pray.

A cloistered company, they are companion-  
less,  
None knoweth here the secret of his  
brother's heart:  
They are but come together for more lone-  
liness,  
Whose bond is solitude and silence all  
their part.

O beatific life! Who is there shall gainsay,  
Your great refusal's victory, your little  
loss,  
Deserting vanity for the more perfect way,  
The sweeter service of the most dolorous  
Cross.

Ye shall prevail at last! Surely ye shall  
prevail!  
Your silence and austerity shall win at  
last:  
Desire and mirth, the world's ephemeral  
lights shall fail,  
The sweet star of your queen is never  
overcast.

We fling up flowers and laugh, we laugh  
across the wine;  
With wine we dull our souls and care-  
ful strains of art;  
Our cups are polished skulls round which  
the roses twine:  
None dares to look at Death who leers  
and lurks apart.

Move on, white company, whom that has  
not sufficed!  
Our viols cease, our wine is death, our  
roses fail:  
Pray for our heedlessness, O dwellers with  
the Christ!  
Though the world fall apart, surely ye  
shall prevail.

### VILLANELLE OF THE POET'S ROAD

[1899.]

WINE and woman and song,  
Three things garnish our way:  
Yet is day over long.

Lest we do our youth wrong,  
Gather them while we may:  
Wine and woman and song.

Three things render us strong,  
Vine leaves, kisses and bay;  
Yet is day over long.

Unto us they belong,  
Us the bitter and gay,  
Wine and woman and song.

We, as we pass along,  
Are sad that they will not stay;  
Yet is day over long.

Fruits and flowers among,  
What is better than they:  
Wine and woman and song?  
Yet is day over long.

## DREGS

[1899.]

THE fire is out, and spent the warmth  
thereof  
(This is the end of every song man sings!)  
The golden wine is drunk, the dregs re-  
main,  
Bitter as wormwood and as salt as pain;  
And health and hope have gone the way  
of love  
Into the drear oblivion of lost things.  
Ghosts go along with us until the end;  
This was a mistress, this, perhaps, a friend.  
With pale, indifferent eyes, we sit and  
wait  
For the dropt curtain and the closing gate:  
This is the end of all the songs man sings.

## LIBERA ME

[1899.]

GODDESS the laughter-loving, Aphrodite,  
befriend!  
Long have I served thine altars, serve me  
now at the end,  
Let me have peace of thee, truce of thee,  
golden one, send.

Heart of my heart have I offered thee, pain  
of my pain,  
Yielding my life for the love of thee into  
thy chain;  
Lady and goddess be merciful, loose me  
again.

All things I had that were fairest, my  
dearest and best,  
Fed the fierce flames on thine altar: ah,  
surely, my breast

Shrined thee alone among goddesses,  
spurning the rest.

Blossom of youth thou hast plucked of  
me, flower of my days;  
Stinted I sought in thine honouring, walked  
in thy ways,  
Song of my soul pouring out to thee, all in  
thy praise.

Fierce was the flame while it lasted, and  
strong was thy wine,  
Meet for immortals that die not, for throats  
such as thine,  
Too fierce for bodies of mortals, too potent  
for mine.

Blossom and bloom hast thou taken, now  
render to me  
Ashes of life that remain to me, few  
though they be,  
Truce of the love of thee, Cyprian, let me  
go free.

Goddess the laughter-loving, Aphrodite,  
restore  
Life to the limbs of me, liberty, hold me  
no more  
Having the first-fruits and flower of me,  
cast me the core.

## A LAST WORD

[1899.]

LET US go hence: the night is now at hand;  
The day is overworn, the birds all flown;  
And we have reaped the crops the gods  
have sown;  
Despair and death; deep darkness o'er the  
land,  
Broods like an owl; we cannot under-  
stand  
Laughter or tears, for we have only  
known  
Surpassing vanity: vain things alone  
Have driven our perverse and aimless  
band.

Let us go hence, somewhither strange and  
cold,  
To Hollow Lands where just men and  
unjust  
Find end of labour, where's rest for the  
old,  
Freedom to all from love and fear and  
lust.  
Twine our torn hands! O pray the earth  
enfold  
Our life-sick hearts and turn them into  
dust.

# ARTHUR SYMONS

[1865—]

## THE STREET-SINGER

[1889.]

SHE sings a pious ballad wearily;  
Her shivering body creeps on painful feet  
Along the muddy runlets of the street;  
The damp is in her throat; she coughs to free  
The cracked and husky notes that tear her chest;  
From side to side she looks with eyes that grope,  
Feverishly hungering in a hopeless hope,  
For pence that will not come; and pence mean rest,  
The rest that pain may steal at night from sleep,  
The rest that hunger gives when satisfied;  
Her fingers twitch to handle them; she sings  
Shriller; her eyes, too hot with tears to weep,  
Fasten upon a window, where, inside,  
A sweet voice mocks her with its carolings.

## ON THE BEACH

[1892.]

NIGHT, a grey sky, a ghostly sea,  
The soft beginning of the rain;  
Black on the horizon, sails that wane  
Into the distance mistily.

The tide is rising, I can hear  
The soft roar broadening far along;  
It cries and murmurs in my ear  
A sleepy old forgotten song.

Softly the stealthy night descends,  
The black sails fade into the sky:  
Is not this, where the sea-line ends,  
The shore-line of infinity?

I cannot think or dream; the grey  
Unending waste of sea and night,  
Dull, impotently infinite,  
Blots out the very hope of day.

## APRIL MIDNIGHT

[1892.]

SIDE by side through the streets at midnight,  
Roaming together,  
Through the tumultuous night of London,  
In the miraculous April weather.

Roaming together under the gaslight,  
Day's work over,  
How the Spring calls to us, here in the city,  
Calls to the heart from the heart of a lover!

Cool the wind blows, fresh in our faces,  
Cleansing, entrancing,  
After the heat and the fumes and the foot-lights,  
Where you dance and I watch your dancing.

Good it is to be here together,  
Good to be roaming,  
Even in London, even at midnight,  
Lover-like in a lover's gloaming.

You the dancer and I the dreamer,  
Children together,  
Wandering lost in the night of London,  
In the miraculous April weather.

## IN THE TRAIN

[1892.]

THE train through the night of the town,  
Through a blackness broken in twain  
By the sudden finger of streets;  
Lights, red, yellow, and brown,  
From curtain and window-pane,  
The flashing eyes of the streets.

Night, and the rush of the train,  
A cloud of smoke through the town,  
Scaring the life of the streets;  
And the leap of the heart again,  
Out into the night, and down  
The dazzling vista of streets!

## PROLOGUE: BEFORE THE CURTAIN

[1895.]

We are the puppets of a shadow-play,  
We dream the plot is woven of our hearts,  
Passionately we play the self-same parts  
Our fathers have played passionately yes-  
terday,  
And our sons play to-morrow. There's no speech  
In all desire, nor any idle word,  
Men have not said and women have not  
heard;  
And when we lean and whisper each to each  
Until the silence quickens to a kiss,

Even so the actor and the actress played  
The lovers yesterday; when the lights fade  
Before our feet, and the obscure abyss  
Opens, and darkness falls about our eyes,  
'Tis only that some momentary rage  
Or rapture blinds us to forget the stage,  
Like the wise actor, most in this thing wise.  
We pass, and have our gesture; love and  
    pain

And hope and apprehension and regret  
Weave ordered lines into a pattern set  
Not for our pleasure, and for us in vain.  
The gesture is eternal; we who pass  
Pass on the gesture; we, who pass, pass on  
One after one into oblivion,  
As shadows dim and vanish from a glass.

#### EPILOGUE: CREDO

[1895.]

EACH, in himself, his hour to be and cease  
Endures alone, but who of men shall dare,  
Sole with himself, his single burden bear,  
All the long day until the night's release?  
Yet ere night falls, and the last shadows  
    close,

This labour of himself is each man's lot;  
All he has gained of earth shall be forgot,  
Himself he leaves behind him when he  
    goes.

If he has any valiancy within,  
If he has made his life his very own,  
If he has loved or laboured, and has known  
A strenuous virtue, or a strenuous sin;  
Then, being dead, his life was not all vain,  
For he has saved what most desire to lose,  
And he has chosen what the few must  
    choose,  
Since life, once lived, shall not return  
    again.

For of our time we lose so large a part  
In serious trifles, and so oft let slip  
The wine of every moment, at the lip  
Its moment, and the moment of the heart.  
We are awake so little on the earth,  
And we shall sleep so long, and rise so  
    late,

If there is any knocking at that gate  
Which is the gate of death, the gate of  
    birth.

#### SEA-WIND

(Translated from Stéphane Mallarmé.)

THE flesh is sad, alas! and all the books  
    are read.  
Flight, only flight! I feel that birds are  
    wild to tread  
The floor of unknown foam, and to attain  
    the skies!  
Nought, neither ancient gardens mirrored  
    in the eyes,

Shall hold this heart that bathes in waters  
    its delight,  
O nights! nor yet my waking lamp, whose  
    lonely light  
Shadows the vacant paper, whiteness profits  
    best,  
Nor the young wife who rocks her baby on  
    her breast.  
I will depart! O steamer, swaying rope  
    and spar,  
Lift anchor for exotic lands that lie afar!  
A weariness, outworn by cruel hopes, still  
    clings  
To the last farewell handkerchief's last  
    beckonings!  
And are not these, the masts inviting  
    storms, not these  
That an awakening wind bends over wreck-  
    ing seas,  
Lost, not a sail, a sail, a flowering isle, ere  
    long?  
But, O my heart, hear thou, hear thou the  
    sailors' song!

#### FROM ROMANCES SANS PAROLES

(Translated from Paul Verlaine.)

TEARS in my heart that weeps,  
Like the rain upon the town.  
What drowsy languor steeps  
In tears my heart that weeps?

O sweet sound of the rain  
On earth and on the roofs!  
For a heart's weary pain  
O the song of the rain!

Vain tears, vain tears, my heart!  
What, none hath done thee wrong?  
Tears without reason start  
From my disheartened heart.

This is the weariest woe,  
O heart, of love and hate  
Too weary, not to know  
Why thou hast all this woe.

#### ARQUES — AFTERNOON

[1897.]

GENTLY a little breeze begins to creep  
Into the valley, and the sleeping trees  
Are stirred, and breathe a little in their  
    sleep,  
    And nod, half-wakened, to the breeze

Cool little quiet shadows wander out  
Across the fields, and dapple with dark  
    trails  
The snake-grey road coiled stealthily about  
    The green hill climbing from the vales.

And faintlier, in this cooler peace of things,  
My brooding thoughts, a scattered flock  
grown few,  
Withdrawn upon their melancholy wing,  
Float farther off against the blue.

## CHOPIN

[1897.]

O PASSIONATE music beating the troubled  
beat  
I have heard in my heart, in the wind, in the  
passing of feet,  
In the passing of dreams, when on heart-  
throbbing wings they move;

O passionate music pallid with ghostly  
fears,  
Chill with the coming of rain, the begin-  
ning of tears,  
I come to you, fleeing you, finding you, fever  
of love!

When I am sleepless at night and I play  
through the night,  
Lest I hear a voice, lest I see, appealing  
and white,  
The face that never, in dreams or at dawn,  
departs,  
Then it is, shuddering music my hands  
have played,  
I find you, fleeing you, finding you, music,  
made  
Of all passionate, wounded, capricious  
consuming hearts.

## THE OLD WOMEN

[1899.]

THEY pass upon their old, tremulous feet,  
Creeping with little satchels down the  
street,  
And they remember, many years ago,  
Passing that way in silks. They wander, slow  
And solitary, through the city ways,  
And they alone remember those old days  
Men have forgotten. In their shaking  
heads  
A dancer of old carnivals yet treads  
The measure of past waltzes, and they see  
The candles lit again, the patchouli  
Sweeten the air, and the warm cloud of  
musk  
Enchant the passing of the passionate  
dusk.  
Then you will see a light begin to creep  
Under the earthen eyelids, dimmed with  
sleep,  
And a new tremor, happy and uncouth,  
Jerking about the corners of the mouth.  
Then the old head drops down again, and  
shakes,  
Muttering.

Sometimes, when the swift gaslight wakes  
The dreams and fever of the sleepless  
town,

A shaking huddled thing in a black gown  
Will steal at midnight, carrying with her  
Violet little bags of lavender,  
Into the tap-room full of noisy light;  
Or, at the crowded earlier hour of night,  
Sidle, with matches, up to some who stand  
About a stage-door, and, with furtive hand,  
Appealing: "I too was a dancer, when  
Your fathers would have been young  
gentlemen!"

And sometimes, out of some lean ancient  
throat,

A broken voice, with here and there a note  
Of unspoilt crystal, suddenly will arise  
Into the night, while a cracked fiddle cries  
Pantingly after; and you know she sings  
The passing of light, famous, passing  
things.

And sometimes, in the hours past midnight,  
reels

Out of an alley upon staggering heels,  
Or into the dark keeping of the stones  
About a doorway, a vague thing of bones  
And draggled hair.

And all these have been loved.

And not one ruinous body has not moved  
The heart of man's desire, nor has not  
seemed

Immortal in the eyes of one who dreamed  
The dream that men call love. This is  
the end

Of much fair flesh; it is for this you tend  
Your delicate bodies many careful years,  
To be this thing of laughter and of tears,  
To be this living judgment of the dead,  
An old grey woman with a shaking head.

## THE UNLOVED

THESE are the women whom no man has  
loved.

Year after year, day after day has moved  
These hearts with many longings, and with  
tears,

And with content; they have received the  
years

With empty hands, expecting no good  
thing;

Life has passed by their doors, not enter-  
ing.

In solitude, and without vain desire,  
They have warmed themselves beside a  
lonely fire;

And, without scorn, beheld as in a glass  
The blown and painted leaves of Beauty  
pass.

Their souls have been made fragrant with  
the spice  
Of costly virtues lit for sacrifice;

They have accepted Life, the unpaid debt,  
And looked for no vain day of reckoning.

Yet

They too in certain windless summer hours  
Have felt the stir of dreams, and dreamed  
the powers

And the exemptions and the miracles  
And the cruelty of Beauty. Citadels  
Of many-walled and deeply-moated hearts  
Have suddenly surrendered to the arts  
Of so compelling magic; entering,  
They have esteemed it but a little thing  
To have won so great a conquest; and  
with haste

They have cast down, and utterly laid  
waste,  
Tower upon tower, and sapped their roots  
with flame;

And passed on that eternity of shame  
Which is the way of Beauty on the earth.  
And they have shaken laughter from its  
mirth,

To be a sound of trumpets and of horns  
Crying the battle-cry of those red morns  
Against a sky of triumph.

On some nights  
Of delicate Springtide, when the hesitant  
lights  
Begin to fade, and glimmer, and grow  
warm,  
And all the softening air is quick with  
storm,  
And the ardours of the young year, enter-  
ing in,  
Flush the grey earth with buds; when  
the trees begin  
To feel a trouble mounting from their  
roots,  
And all their green life blossoming into  
shoots,  
They too, in some obscure, unblossoming  
strife,  
Have felt the stirring of the sap of life.  
And they have wept, with bowed head; in  
the street

They hear the twittering of little feet,  
The rocking of the cradles in their hearts.

This is a mood, and, as a mood, departs  
With the dried tears; and they resume the  
tale

Of the dropt stitches; these must never fail  
For a dream's sake; nor, for a memory,  
The telling of a patient rosary.

### THE BEGGARS

[1899.]

It is the beggars who possess the earth.  
Kings on their throne have but the nar-  
row girth  
Of some poor known dominion; these  
possess  
All the unknown, and that vast happiness

Of the uncertainty of human things.  
Wandering on eternal wanderings,  
They know the world; and, tasting but the  
bread

Of charity, know man; and, strangely led  
By some vague, certain, and appointed  
hand,

Know fate; and, being lonely, understand  
Some little of the thing without a name  
That sits by the roadside and talks with  
them,

When they are silent; for the soul is shy  
If more than its own shadow loiter by.  
They and the birds are old acquaintances,  
Knowing the dawn together; theirs it is  
To settle on the dusty land like crows,  
The ragged vagabonds of the air; who  
knows

How they too shall be fed, day after day,  
And surer than the birds, for are not they  
The prodigal sons of God, our piteous  
Aliens, outcast and accusing us?  
Do they not ask of us their own, and wait,  
Humbly, among the dogs about the gate,  
While we are feasting? They will wait  
till night:

Who shall wait longer?

Dim, shadowy, white,  
The highway calls; they follow till it ends,  
And all the way they walk among their  
friends,  
Sun, wind, and rain, their tearful sister  
rain,  
Their brother wind. Forest and hill and  
plain  
Know them and are forgotten. Grey and  
old,  
Their feet begin to linger, brown arms  
fold  
The heavy peace of earth about their  
heart,  
And soon, and without trouble, they depart  
On the last journey.

As the beggar lies,  
With naked face, remembering the skies,  
I think he only wonders: Shall I find  
A good road still, a hayrick to my mind,  
A tavern now and then upon the road?  
He has been earth's guest, he goes; the  
old abode  
Drops to the old horizon, and the day  
Is over, and the dark is on the way.

### DIVISIONS ON A GROUND—NO. II

[1899.]

THE sorrowful, who have loved, I pity not;  
But those, not having loved, who do rejoice  
To have escaped the cruelty of love,  
I pity, as I pity the unborn.  
Love is, indeed, as life is, full of care,  
The tyrant of the soul, the death of peace

Rash father and blind parricide of joy;  
 And it were better never to have been,  
 If slothful ease, calm hours, are all of life,  
 Than to have chosen such a bedfellow.  
 Yet, if not rest, but rapture, and to attain  
 The wisdom that is silence in the stars  
 When the great morning-song is quieted,  
 Be more of life than these, and worth the  
 pain  
 Of living, then choose love, although he  
 bring  
 Mountainous griefs, griefs that have made  
 men mad.  
 Be sorrowful, all ye that have not loved,  
 Bow down, be sorrowful exceedingly,  
 Cover your heads from the embracing air,  
 And from the eye of the sun, lest ye be  
 shamed;  
 Earth would be naked of you; ye have  
 known  
 Only to hide from living; life rejects  
 The burden of your unaccompanied days.  
 This is of all things saddest in the world,  
 Not that men love, not that men die for  
 love,  
 But that they dare be cowards of their joy,  
 Even unto death; who, dying without love,  
 Drop into narrow graves to shiver there  
 Among the winds of time, till time's last  
 wind  
 Cleanse off the poor, lonely, and finite dust  
 From earth made ready for eternity.

#### DIVISIONS ON A GROUND.—NO. III

[1899.]

LET me hear music, for I am not sad,  
 But half in love with sadness. To dream  
 so  
 And dream, and so forget the dream, and  
 so  
 Dream I am dreaming! This old little  
 voice,  
 Which pants and flutters in the clavichord,  
 Has the bird's wings in it, and women's  
 tears,  
 The dust has drunken long ago, and sighs  
 As of a voiceless crying of old love  
 That died and never spoke; and then the  
 soul  
 Of one who sought for wisdom; and these  
 cry  
 Out of the disappointment of the grave.  
 And something, in the old and little voice,  
 Calls from so farther off than far away,  
 I tremble, hearing it, lest it draw me forth,  
 This flickering self, desiring to be gone,  
 Into the boundless and abrupt abyss  
 Whereat begins infinity; and there  
 This flickering self wander eternally  
 Among the soulless, uncreated winds  
 Which storm against the barriers of the  
 world.

But most I hear the pleading and sad voice  
 Of beauty, sad because it cannot speak  
 Out of harsh stones and out of evil noise,  
 And out of thwarted faces, and the gleam  
 Of things corrupted, and all ruinous things.  
 This is the voice that cries, and would be  
 heard,  
 And can but speak in music. Venerable  
 And ageless beauty of the world, whose  
 breath  
 Is life in all things, I have seen your form  
 In cloud, and grass, and wave, and glory  
 of man,  
 Flawless, but I have heard your very voice  
 Here only, here only human, and here sad  
 Only of all your voices upon earth.

#### TO NIGHT

[1899.]

I HAVE loved wind and light,  
 And the bright sea,  
 But, holy and most secret Night,  
 Not as I love and have loved thee.

God, like all highest things,  
 Hides light in shade,  
 And in the night his visitings  
 To sleep and dreams are clearest made.  
 Love, that knows all things well,  
 Loves the night best;  
 Joys whereof daylight dares not tell.  
 Are his, and the diviner rest.  
 And Life, whom day shows plain  
 His prison-bars,  
 Feels the close walls and the hard chain  
 Fade when the darkness brings the stars.

#### OPALS

[1899.]

My soul is like this cloudy, flaming opal  
 ring.  
 The fields of earth are in it, green and  
 glimmering,  
 The waves of the blue sky, night's purple  
 flower of noon,  
 The vanishing cold scintillations of the  
 moon,  
 And the red heart that is a flame within a  
 flame.  
 And as the opal dies, and is reborn the  
 same,  
 And all the fire that is its life-blood seems  
 to dart  
 Through the veined variable intricacies of  
 its heart,  
 And ever wandering ever wanders back  
 again,  
 So must my swift soul constant to itself  
 remain,  
 Opal, have I not been as variable as you?

But, cloudy opal flaming green and red and blue,  
Are you not ever constant in your varying,  
Even as my soul, O captive opal of my ring?

SEPTEMBER IDYL: IN THE HAMMOCK: CHAMÉANE

[1899.]

A sky of green and gold, tremulous, delicate,  
Starred with pale blue, and bright with little voices; wind  
Lifting the golden outer fringe, autumn has thinned;  
A yellow leaf drops rustling, and another: wait,  
The leaves begin to whisper, and the voices cease:  
I hear the silence; but a voice flutters again,  
A little, fluting voice, soft; piercing, as the rain;  
I close my eyes, and all my body sways with peace.  
Delicate, tremulous, seen under eyelids closed,  
The sky of green and gold sways over me, and seems  
To fill the languid soul with the desire of dreams;  
But the sky fades, and only inner eyelids, rosed  
With filtered sunlight falling, shadow as they pass  
Not even dreams; until a trailing hand perceives,  
Sudden, the earth again, in the crisp touch of leaves,  
And the arresting slender fingers of the grass.

WIND ON THE SEA

[1899.]

THE loneliness of the sea is in my heart,  
And the wind is not more lonely than this grey mind.  
I have thought far thoughts, I have loved,  
    I have loved, and I find  
Love gone, thought weary, and I, alas, left behind.

The loneliness of my heart is in the sea,  
And my mind is not more lonely than this grey wind.

Who shall stay the feet of the sea, or bind  
The wings of the wind? only the feet of mankind

Grow old in the place of their sorrow, and bitter is the heart  
That may not wander as the wind or return as the sea.

THE LOOM OF DREAMS

[1901.]

I BROIDER the world upon a loom,  
I broider with dreams my tapestry;  
Here in a little lonely room  
I am master of earth and sea,  
And the planets come to me.

I broider my life into the frame,  
I broider my love, thread upon thread;  
The world goes by with its glory and shame,  
Crowns are bartered and blood is shed;  
I sit and broider my dreams instead.

And the only world is the world of my dreams,  
And my weaving the only happiness;  
For what is the world but what it seems?  
And who knows but that God, beyond our guess,  
Sits weaving worlds out of loneliness.

THE REGRET

[1901.]

IT seems to me, dearest, if you were dead,  
And thought returned to me after the tears,  
The hopeless first oblivious tears, were shed,  
That this would be the bitterest, not that I Had lost for all sad hours of all my years  
The joys enjoyed and happy hours gone by;

Ah no, but that while we had time to live  
And love before the coming of the night,  
Yet knew the hours of daylight fugitive,  
Proud as a child who will not what he would,  
Sometimes I did not love you as I might.  
Sometimes you did not love me when you could.

# WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

(1865—)

## THE INDIAN UPON GOD

[1886]

I PASSED along the water's edge below the humid trees,  
My spirit rocked in evening light, the rushes round my knees,  
My spirit rocked in sleep and sighs; and saw the moorfowl pace  
All dripping on a grassy slope, and saw them cease to chase  
Each other round in circles, and heard the eldest speak:  
*Who holds the world between His bill and made us strong or weak*  
*Is an undying moorfowl, and He lives beyond the sky.*  
*The rains are from His dripping wing, the moonbeams from his eye.*  
I passed a little further on and heard a lotus talk:  
*Who made the world and ruleth it, He hangeth on a stalk,*  
*For I am in His image made, and all this tinkling tide*  
*Is but a sliding drop of rain between His petals wide.*  
A little way within the gloom a roebuck raised his eyes  
Brimful of starlight, and he said: *The Stamper of the Skies,*  
*He is a gentle roebuck; for how else, I pray, could he*  
*Conceive a thing so sad and soft, a gentle thing like me?*  
I passed a little further on and heard a peacock say:  
*Who made the grass and made the worms and made my feathers gay,*  
*He is a monstrous peacock, and He waveth all the night*  
*His languid tail above us, lit with myriad spots of light.*

## THE ROSE OF BATTLE

[1892.]

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!  
The tall thought-woven sails, that flap unfurled  
Above the tide of hours, trouble the air,  
And God's bell buoyed to be the water's care;  
While hushed from fear, or loud with hope, a band  
With blown, spray-dabbled hair gather at hand.

*Turn it you may from battles never done,*  
*I call, as they go by me one by one,*  
*Danger no refuge holds, and war no peace,*  
*For him who hears love sing and never cease,*  
*Beside her clean-swept hearth, her quiet shade;*  
*But gather all for whom no love hath made*  
*A woven silence; or but came to cast*  
*A song into the air, and singing past*  
*To smile on the pale dawn; and gather you*  
*Who have sought more than is in rain or dew*  
*Or in the sun and moon, or on the earth,*  
*Or sighs amid the wandering, starry mirth,*  
*Or comes in laughter from the sea's sad lips;*  
*And wage<sup>1</sup> God's battles in the long gray ships.*  
*The sad, the lonely, the insatiable,*  
*To these old Night shall all her mystery tell;*  
*God's bell has claimed them by the little cry*  
*Of their sad hearts, that may not live nor die.*

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!  
You, too, have come where the dim tides are hurled  
Upon the wharves of sorrow, and heard ring  
The bell that calls us on; the sweet far thing.  
Beauty grown sad with its eternity  
Made you of us, and of the dim gray sea.  
Our long ships loose thought-woven sails and wait,  
For God has bid them share an equal fate;  
And when at last defeated in His wars,  
They have gone down under the same white stars,  
We shall no longer hear the little cry  
Of our sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

## THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

[1890.]

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for  
peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning  
to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon  
a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night  
and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low  
sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway or on the  
pavement gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

### WHEN YOU ARE OLD

[1892.]

WHEN you are old and gray and full of  
sleep,  
And nodding by the fire, take down this  
book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft  
look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows  
deep;

How many loved your moments of glad  
grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or  
true;  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing  
face.

And bending down beside the glowing bars  
Murmur, a little sadly, how love fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

### THE HOSTING OF THE SIDHE

[1893.]

THE host is riding from Knockarea  
And over the grave of Clooth-na-bare;  
Caolte tossing his burning hair  
And Niamh calling *Away, come away:*  
*Empty your heart of its mortal dream.*  
*The winds awaken, the leaves whirl round,*  
*Our cheeks are pale, our hair is unbound,*  
*Our breasts are heaving, our eyes are a-*  
*gleam,*  
*Our arms are waving, our lips are apart,*  
*And if any gaze on our rushing band,*  
*We come between him and the deed of his*  
*hand,*  
*We come between him and the hope of his*  
*heart.*  
The host is rushing 'twixt night and day,  
And where is there hope or deed as fair?  
Caolte tossing his burning hair,  
And Niamh calling, *Away, come away.*

### THE LOVER TELLS OF THE ROSE IN HIS HEART

[1892.]

ALL things uncomely and broken, all things  
worn out and old,  
The cry of a child by the roadway, the  
creak of a lumbering cart,  
The heavy steps of the ploughman, splash-  
ing the wintry mould,  
Are wronging your image that blossoms a  
rose in the depths of my heart.

The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong  
too great to be told;  
I hunger to build them anew and sit on a  
green knoll apart,  
With the earth and the sky and the water,  
remade, like a casket of gold  
For my dreams of your image that blos-  
soms a rose in the depths of my heart.

### HE REMEMBERS FORGOTTEN BEAUTY

[1896.]

WHEN my arms wrap you round I press  
My heart upon the loveliness  
That has long faded from the world;  
The jewelled crowns that kings have  
hurled  
In shadowy pools, when armies fled;  
The love-tales wrought with silken thread  
By dreaming ladies upon cloth  
That has made fat the murderous moth;  
The roses that of old time were  
Woven by ladies in their hair,  
The dew-cold lilies ladies bore  
Through many a sacred corridor  
Where such gray clouds of incense rose  
That only gods' eyes did not close;  
For that pale breast and lingering hand  
Come from a more dream-heavy land,  
A more dream-heavy hour than this;  
And when you sigh from kiss to kiss  
I hear white Beauty sighing, too,  
For hours when all must fade like dew  
But flame on flame, deep under deep,  
Throne over throne, where in half sleep  
Their swords upon their iron knees  
Brood her high lonely mysteries.

### THE SECRET ROSE

[1897.]

FAR off, most secret, and inviolate Rose,  
Enfold me in my hour of hours; where  
those  
Who sought thee in the Holy Sepulchre,  
Or in the wine vat, dwell beyond the stir  
And tumult of defeated dreams; and deep  
Among pale eyelids, heavy with the sleep

Men have named beauty. Thy great leaves  
enfold  
The ancient beards, the helms of ruby and  
gold  
Of the crowned Magi; and the king whose  
eyes  
Saw the Pierced Hands and Rood of elder  
rise  
In druid vapour and make the torches dim;  
Till vain frenzy awoke and he died; and  
him  
Who met Fand walking among flaming  
dew  
By a gray shore where the wind never blew,  
And lost the world and Emer for a kiss;  
And him who drove the gods out of their  
liss,  
And till a hundred morns had flowered red,  
Feasted and wept the barrows of his dead;  
And the proud dreaming king who flung  
the crown  
And sorrow away, and calling bard and  
clown  
Dwelt among wine-stained wanderers in  
deep woods;  
And him who sold tillage, and house, and  
goods,  
And sought through lands and islands  
numberless years,  
Until he found with laughter and with  
tears,  
A woman, of so shining loveliness,  
That men threshed corn at midnight by a  
tress,  
A little stolen tress. I, too, await  
The hour of thy great wind of love and  
hate.  
When shall the stars be blown about the  
sky,  
Like the sparks blown out of a smithy,  
and die?  
Surely thine hour has come, thy great wind  
blows,  
Far off, most secret, and inviolate Rose?

### THE LAND OF HEART'S DESIRE

[1894.]

#### PERSONS IN THE PLAY

Maurteen Bruin.  
Shawn Bruin.  
Father Hart.  
Bridget Bruin.  
Maire Bruin.  
A Faery Child.

*The scene is laid in the Barony of Kilmacowen  
in the county of Sligo, and the characters are  
supposed to speak in Gaelic. They wear the  
costume of a century ago.*

*The kitchen of MAURTEEN BRUIN'S house.  
An open grate with a turf fire is at the left side  
of the room, with a table in front of it. There  
is a door leading to the open air at the back,  
and another door a little to its left, leading  
into an inner room. There is a window,*

*a settle, and a large dresser on the right side  
of the room, and a great bowl of primroses on  
the sill of the window. MAURTEEN BRUIN  
FATHER HART, and BRIDGET BRUIN are  
sitting at the table. SHAWN BRUIN is setting  
the table for supper. MAIRE BRUIN sits on  
the settle reading a yellow manuscript.*

#### BRIDGET BRUIN

BECAUSE I bade her go and feed the calves,  
She took that old book down out of the  
thatch  
And has been doubled over it all day.  
We would be deafened by her groans and  
moans  
Had she to work as some do, Father Hart,  
Get up at dawn like me, and mend and  
scour;  
Or ride abroad in the boisterous night like  
you,  
The pyx and blessed bread under your arm.

#### SHAWN BRUIN

You are too cross.

#### BRIDGET BRUIN

The young side with the young.

#### MAURTEEN BRUIN

She quarrels with my wife a bit at times,  
And is too deep just now in the old book;  
But do not blame her greatly; she will grow  
As quiet as a puff-ball in a tree  
When but the moons of marriage dawn  
and die  
For half a score of times.

#### FATHER HART

Their hearts are wild  
As be the hearts of birds, till children come.

#### BRIDGET BRUIN

She would not mind the griddle, milk the  
cow,  
Or even lay the knives and spread the cloth.

#### FATHER HART

I never saw her read a book before:  
What may it be?

#### MAURTEEN BRUIN

I do not rightly know:  
It has been in the thatch for fifty years.  
My father told me my grandfather wrote  
it,  
Killed a red heifer and bound it with the  
hide.  
But draw your chair this way — supper is  
spread;  
And little good he got out of the book,  
Because it filled his house with roaming  
bards,  
And roaming ballad-makers and the like,  
And wasted all his goods.— Here is the  
wine;

The griddle bread's beside you, Father Hart,  
Colleen, what have you got there in the  
book  
That you must leave the bread to cool?  
Had I,  
Or had my father, read or written books  
There were no stocking full of silver and  
gold  
To come, when I am dead, to Shawn and  
you.

FATHER HART

You should not fill your head with foolish  
dreams.  
What are you reading?

MAIRE BRUIN

How a Princess Edain,  
A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard  
A voice singing on a May eve like this,  
And followed, half awake and half asleep,  
Until she came into the land of faery,  
Where nobody gets old and godly and  
grave,  
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,  
Where nobody gets old and bitter of  
tongue;  
And she is still there, busied with a dance,  
Deep in the dewy shadow of a wood,  
Or where stars walk upon a mountain top.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Persuade the colleen to put by the book:  
My grandfather would mutter just such  
things,  
And he was no judge of a dog or horse,  
And any idle boy could blarney him.  
Just speak your mind.

FATHER HART

Put it away, my colleen.  
God spreads the heavens above us like  
great wings,  
And gives a little round of deeds and days,  
And then come the wrecked angels and set  
snares,  
And bait them with light hopes and heavy  
dreams,  
Until the heart is puffed with pride and  
goes,  
Half shuddering and half joyous, from  
God's peace;  
And it was some wrecked angel, blind  
from tears,  
Who flattered Edain's heart with merry  
words.  
My colleen, I have seen some other girls  
Restless and ill at ease, but years went by  
And they grew like their neighbours and  
were glad  
In minding children, working at the churn,  
And gossiping of weddings and of wakes;  
For life moves out of a red flare of dreams  
Into a common light of common hours,  
Until old age bring the red flare again.

SHAWN BRUIN

Yet do not blame her greatly, Father Hart,  
For she is dull while I am in the fields,  
And mother's tongue were harder still to  
bear,  
But for her fancies: this is May Eve too,  
When the good people post about the world,  
And surely one may think of them to-night.  
Maire, have you the primroses to fling  
Before the door to make a golden path  
For them to bring good luck into the house?  
Remember, they may steal new-married  
brides

After the fall of twilight on May Eve.

[MAIRE BRUIN goes over to the window  
and takes flowers from the bowl and  
strews them outside the door.

FATHER HART

You do well, daughter, because God permits  
Great power to the good people on May  
Eve.

SHAWN BRUIN

They can work all their will with prim-  
roses—  
Change them to golden money, or little  
flames  
To burn up those who do them any wrong.

MAIRE BRUIN [in a dreamy voice]

I had no sooner flung them by the door  
Than the wind cried and hurried them  
away;  
And then a child came running in the wind  
And caught them in her hands and fondled  
them:  
Her dress was green: her hair was of red  
gold;  
Her face was pale as water before dawn.

FATHER HART

Whose child can this be?

MAURTEEN BRUIN

No one's child at all.  
She often dreams that some one has gone  
by  
When there was nothing but a puff of  
wind.

MAIRE BRUIN

They will not bring good luck into the  
house,  
For they have blown the primroses away;  
Yet I am glad that I was courteous to  
them.  
For are not they, likewise, children of God?

FATHER HART

Colleen, they are the children of the Fiend,  
And they have power until the end of Time,  
When God shall fight with them a great  
pitched battle  
And hack them into pieces.

## MAIRE BRUIN

He will smile,  
Father, perhaps, and open His great door,  
And call the pretty and kind into His house.

## FATHER HART

Did but the lawless angels see that door,  
They would fall, slain by everlasting peace;  
And when such angels knock upon our  
doors  
Who goes with them must drive through  
the same storm.

[*A knock at the door. MAIRE BRUIN opens it and then goes to the dresser and fills a porringer with milk and hands it through the door and takes it back empty and closes the door.*

## MAIRE BRUIN

A little queer old woman cloaked in green,  
Who came to beg a porringer of milk.

## BRIDGET BRUIN

The good people go asking milk and fire  
Upon May Eve.—Woe upon that house  
that gives,  
For they have power upon it for a year.  
I knew you would bring evil on the house.

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

Who was she?

## MAIRE BRUIN

Both the tongue and face  
were strange.

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

Some strangers came last week to Clover  
Hill;  
She must be one of them.

## BRIDGET BRUIN

I am afraid.

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

The priest will keep all harm out of the  
house.

## FATHER HART

The Cross will keep all harm out of the  
house  
While it hangs there.

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

Come, sit beside me, colleen,  
And put away your dreams of discontent,  
For I would have you light up my last days  
Like a bright torch of pine, and when I die  
I will make you the wealthiest hereabout;  
For hid away where nobody can find  
I have a stocking full of silver and gold.

## BRIDGET BRUIN

You are the fool of every pretty face,  
And I must pinch and pare that my son's  
wife  
May have all kinds of ribbons for her head.

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

Do not be cross; she is a right good girl!  
The butter is by your elbow, Father Hart.  
My colleen, have not Fate and Time and  
Change

Done well for me and for old Bridget  
there?

We have a hundred acres of good land,  
And sit beside each other at the fire,  
The wise priest of our parish to our right,  
And you and our dear son to left of us.  
To sit beside the board and drink good  
wine

And watch the turf smoke coiling from the  
fire

And feel content and wisdom in your heart,  
This is the best of life; when we are young  
We long to tread a way none trod before,  
But find the excellent old way through love  
And through the care of children to the  
hour

For bidding Fate and Time and Change  
good-bye.

[*A knock at the door. MAIRE BRUIN opens it and then takes a sod of turf out of the hearth in the tongs and passes it through the door and closes the door and remains standing by it.*

## MAIRE BRUIN

A little queer old man in a green coat,  
Who asked a burning sod to light his pipe.

## BRIDGET BRUIN

You have now given milk and fire, and  
brought,  
For all you know, evil upon the house.  
Before you married you were idle and fine,  
And went about with ribbons on your head;  
And now you are a good-for-nothing wife.

## SHAWN BRUIN

Be quiet, mother!

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

You are much too cross!

## MAIRE BRUIN

What do I care if I have given this house,  
Where I must hear all day a bitter tongue,  
Into the power of faeries!

## BRIDGET BRUIN

You know well  
How calling the good people by that name  
Or talking of them overmuch at all  
May bring all kinds of evil on the house.

## MAIRE BRUIN

Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!  
 Let me have all the freedom I have lost—  
 Work when I will and idle when I will!  
 Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,  
 For I would ride with you upon the wind,  
 Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,  
 And dance upon the mountains like a flame!

## FATHER HART

You cannot know the meaning of your words!

## MAIRE BRUIN

Father, I am right weary of four tongues:  
 A tongue that is too crafty and too wise,  
 A tongue that is too godly and too grave,  
 A tongue that is more bitter than the tide,  
 And a kind tongue too full of drowsy love,  
 Of drowsy love and my captivity.

[SHAWN BRUIN comes over to her and leads her to the settle.

## SHAWN BRUIN

Do not blame me: I often lie awake  
 Thinking that all things trouble your bright head—  
 How beautiful it is—such broad pale brows  
 Under a cloudy blossoming of hair!  
 Sit down beside me here—these are too old.  
 And have forgotten they were ever young.

## MAIRE BRUIN

O, you are the great door-post of this house,  
 And I the red nasturtium climbing up.  
 [She takes SHAWN's hand but looks shyly at the priest and lets it go.

## FATHER HART

Good daughter, take his hand—by love alone  
 God binds us to Himself and to the hearth  
 And shuts us from the waste beyond His peace,  
 From maddening freedom and bewildering light.

## SHAWN BRUIN

Would that the world were mine to give it to you.  
 With every quiet hearth and barren waste,  
 The maddening freedom of its woods and tides,  
 And the bewildering light upon its hills.

## MAIRE BRUIN

Then I would take and break it in my hands  
 To see you smile watching it crumble away.

## SHAWN BRUIN

Then I would mould a world of fire and dew  
 With no one bitter, grave, or over wise,  
 And nothing marred or old to do you wrong.  
 And crowd the enraptured quiet of the sky  
 With candles burning to your lonely face.

## MAIRE BRUIN

Your looks are all the candles that I need.

## SHAWN BRUIN

Once a fly dancing in a beam o' the sun,  
 Or the light wind blowing out of the dawn,  
 Could fill your heart with dreams none other knew,  
 But now the indissoluble sacrament  
 Has mixed your heart that was most proud and cold  
 With my warm heart for ever; and sun and moon,  
 Must fade and heaven be rolled up like a scroll;  
 But your white spirit still walk by my spirit.

[A VOICE sings in the distance.

## MAIRE BRUIN

Did you hear something call? O, guard me close,  
 Because I have said wicked things to-night;  
 And seen a pale-faced child with red-gold hair,  
 And longed to dance upon the winds with her.

## A VOICE [close to the door]

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,

The wind blows over the lonely of heart  
 And the lonely of heart is withered away  
 While the faeries dance in a place apart,  
 Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,  
 Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;  
 For they hear the wind laugh, and murmur, and sing

Of a land where even the old are fair,  
 And even the wise are merry of tongue;  
 But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,  
 'When the wind has laughed and murmured,  
 and sung,  
 The lonely of heart is withered away!'

## MAURTEEN BRUIN

I am right happy, and would make all els Be happy too. I hear a child outside, And will go bring her in out of the cold.

[He opens the door. A CHILD dressed in pale green and with red-gold hair comes into the house.

# WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

## THE CHILD

I tire of winds and waters and pale lights.

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

You are most welcome. It is cold out there.  
Who'd think to face such cold on a May Eve?

## THE CHILD

And when I tire of this warm little house,  
There is one here who must away, away,  
To where the woods, the stars, and the  
white streams  
Are holding a continual festival.

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

I listen to her dreamy and strange talk  
Come to the fire.

## THE CHILD

I will sit upon your knee,  
For I have run from where the winds are born,  
And long to rest my feet a little while.

[She sits upon his knee.]

### BRIDGET BRUIN

How pretty you are!

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

Your hair is wet with dew!

### BRIDGET BRUIN

will warm your chilly feet.  
[She takes the CHILD's feet in her hands.]

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

You must have come a long, long way, for I have never seen our pretty face, and must be tired and hungry:  
Here is some bread and wine.

## THE CHILD

The wine is bitter  
Old mother, have you no sweet food for me?

### BRIDGET BRUIN

have some honey!

[She goes into the next room.]

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

You are a dear child  
The mother was gone great before you came.

[BRIDGET comes back with the honey and gives it to the CHILD who has a piece of bread with it.]

### BRIDGET BRUIN

he is the child of some place, he has a fair white hand, and a fair white brow.

I like to look at you, son, how dark you are, how brown.  
And I will make up the fire to warm you.  
For the gods will bring the pine trees back again.  
Would you please a tall book stand by you?

## THE CHILD

Old mother, my bed stands by the pine trees down  
By night above where you know me to be.  
And evening comes you spreading the white cloth.

The young may lie in bed and dream and hope,  
But you work on because your heart is old.

### BRIDGET BRUIN

The young are idle.

## THE CHILD

Old father, you are wise  
And all the years have gathered in your heart  
To whisper of the wonders that are gone.  
The young must sigh through many a day  
and hope,  
But you are wise because your heart is old.

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

O, who would think to find so young a child

Loving old age and wisdom!

[BRIDGET gives her more bread and honey]

## THE CHILD

No more, mother.

### MAURTEEN BRUIN

What a small bite! the milk is ready now!  
What a small sip!

## THE CHILD

Put on my shoes, old mother,  
For I would like to dance with the bees  
The bees are dancing by the pine trees  
And I would like to dance with the bees  
And the white stars have danced since  
they were born,

[BRIDGET having put on her shoes, she gets off the old man's knees and is about to dance, but suddenly sees the child and shudders and covers her eyes]

What is that child doing on the pine trees?

## BRIDGET BRUIN

You cannot know how long the pine trees

They are like the sun and moon.

## THE CHILD

He is the child of some place,

BRIDGET BRUIN

I have begun to be afraid again!

THE CHILD

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

That would be wickedness!

BRIDGET BRUIN

That would be sacrilege!

THE CHILD

The tortured thing!

Hide it away!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

Her parents are to blame.

FATHER HART

That is the image of the Son of God.

[The CHILD puts her arms around his neck and kisses him.]

THE CHILD

Hide it away! Hide it away!

MAURTEEN BRUIN

No! no!

FATHER HART

Because you are so young and little a child  
I will go take it down.

THE CHILD

Hide it away,

And cover it out of sight and out of mind.  
[FATHER HART takes it down and carries it towards the inner room.]

FATHER HART

Since you have come into this barony  
I will instruct you in our blessed faith:  
Being a clever child you will soon learn.

[To the others.]

We must be tender with all budding things,  
Our Maker let no thought of Calvary  
Trouble the morning stars in their first song.

[Puts the crucifix in the inner room.]

THE CHILD

Here is level ground for dancing. I will dance.

The wind is blowing on the waving reeds,  
The wind is blowing on the heart of man.  
[She dances, swaying about like the reeds.]

MAIRE [to SHAWN BRUIN.]

Just now when she came near I thought I heard

Other small steps beating upon the floor,  
And a faint music blowing in the wind —  
Invisible pipes giving her feet the time.

SHAWN BRUIN

I heard no steps but hers.

MAIRE BRUIN

Look to the bolt!  
Because the unholy powers are abroad.

MAURTEEN BRUIN [to the CHILD.]

Come over here, and if you promise me  
Not to talk wickedly of holy things  
I will give you something.

THE CHILD

Bring it me, old father!

[MAURTEEN BRUIN goes into the next room.]

FATHER HART

I will have queen cakes when you come to me!

[MAURTEEN BRUIN returns and lays a piece of money on the table. The CHILD makes a gesture of refusal.]

MAURTEEN BRUIN

It will buy lots of toys; see how it glitters!

THE CHILD

Come, tell me, do you love me?

MAURTEEN BRUIN

I love you!

THE CHILD

Ah! but you love this fireside!

FATHER HART

I love you.

THE CHILD

But you love Him above.

BRIDGET BRUIN

She is blaspheming.

THE CHILD [to MAIRE]

And do you love me?

MAIRE BRUIN

I — I do not know.

THE CHILD

You love that great tall fellow over there:  
Yet I could make you ride upon the winds,  
Run on the top of the dishevelled tide,  
And dance upon the mountains like a flame!

MAIRE BRUIN

Queen of the Angels and kind Saints, defend us!  
Some dreadful fate has fallen: a while ago  
The wind cried out and took the primroses.

And she ran by me laughing in the wind,  
And I gave milk and fire, and she came in  
And made you hide the blessed crucifix.

## FATHER HART

You fear because of her wild, pretty prat-  
tle;  
She knows no better.

[To the CHILD] Child, how old are you?

## THE CHILD

When winter sleep is abroad my hair  
grows thin,  
My feet unsteady. When the leaves  
awaken  
My mother carries me in her golden arms.  
I will soon put on my womanhood and  
marry  
The spirits of the wood and water, but  
who can tell  
When I was born for the first time? I  
think  
I am much older than the eagle cock  
That blinks and blinks on Ballygawley Hill,  
And he is the oldest thing under the moon.

## FATHER HART

She is of the faery people.

## THE CHILD

I am Brig's daughter.

I sent my messengers for milk and fire,  
And then I heard one call to me and came.  
[They all except MAIRE BRUIN gather  
about the priest for protection. MAIRE  
BRUIN stays on the settle in a stupor  
of terror. The CHILD takes primroses  
from the great bowl and begins to  
strew them between herself and the  
priest and about MAIRE BRUIN. Dur-  
ing the following dialogue SHAWN  
BRUIN goes more than once to the  
brink of the primroses, but shrinks back  
to the others timidly.]

## FATHER HART

I will confront this mighty spirit alone.  
[They cling to him and hold him back.]

THE CHILD [while she strews the prim-  
roses]

No one whose heart is heavy with human  
tears  
Can cross these little cressets of the wood.

## FATHER HART

Be not afraid, the Father is with us,  
And all the nine angelic hierarchies,  
The Holy Martyrs and the Innocents,  
The adoring Magi in their coats of mail,  
And He who died and rose on the third  
day,  
And Mary with her seven times wounded  
heart.

[The CHILD ceases strewing the prim-  
roses, and kneels upon the settle beside  
MAIRE and puts her arms about her  
neck.]

Cry, daughter, to the Angels and Saints.

## THE CHILD

You shall go with me, newly-married bride,  
And gaze upon a merrier multitude:  
White-armed Nuala and Aengus of the  
birds,

And Feacra of the hurtling foam, and him  
Who is the ruler of the western host,  
Finvarra, and their Land of Heart's Desire,  
Where beauty has no ebb, decay no flood,  
But joy is wisdom, Time an endless song.  
I kiss you and the world begins to fade.

## FATHER HART

Daughter, I call you unto home and love!

## THE CHILD

Stay, and come with me, newly-married  
bride,  
For, if you hear him, you grow like the  
rest:  
Bear children, cook, be mindful of the  
churn,  
And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,  
And sit at last there, old and bitter of  
tongue,  
Watching the white stars war upon your  
hopes.

## FATHER HART

Daughter, I point you out the way to  
heaven.

## THE CHILD

But I can lead you, newly-married bride,  
Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,  
Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,  
Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue,  
And where kind tongues bring no captivity,  
For we are only true to the far lights  
We follow singing, over valley and hill.

## FATHER HART

By the dear name of the one crucified,  
I bid you, Maire Bruin, come to me.

## THE CHILD

I keep you in the name of your own heart!  
[She leaves the settle, and stooping takes  
up a mass of primroses and kisses them.]

We have great power to-night, dear golden

folk,  
For he took down and hid the crucifix.  
And my invisible brethren fill the house;  
I hear their footsteps going up and down.  
O, they shall soon rule all the hearts of  
men

And own all lands; last night they merrily  
danced

About his chapel belfrey! [To MAIRE.]  
Come away,  
I hear my brethren bidding us away!

FATHER HART

I will go fetch the crucifix again.  
[They hang about him in terror and prevent him from moving.

BRIDGET BRUIN

The enchanted flowers will kill us if you go.

MAURTEEN BRUIN

They turn the flowers to little twisted flames.

SHAWN BRUIN

The little twisted flames burn up the heart.

THE CHILD

I hear them crying, 'Newly married bride, Come to the woods and waters and pale lights.'

MAIRE BRUIN

I will go with you.

FATHER HART

She is lost, alas!

THE CHILD [standing by the door.]  
Then, follow: but the heavy body of clay,  
And clinging mortal hope must fall from  
you;  
For we who ride the winds, run on the waves,  
And dance upon the mountains, are more light  
Than dewdrops on the banners of the dawn.

MAIRE BRUIN

Then take my soul.

[SHAWN BRUIN goes over to her.

SHAWN BRUIN

Beloved, do not leave me!

What will my life be if you go with her?  
Remember when I met you by the well  
And took your hand in mine and spoke of love.

MAIRE BRUIN

Dear face! Dear voice!

THE CHILD

Come, newly-married bride!

MAIRE BRUIN

I always loved her world—and yet—and yet—

[Sinks into his arms.

THE CHILD [from the door]  
White bird, white bird, come with me, little bird!

MAIRE BRUIN

She calls my soul!

THE CHILD

Come with me, little bird!

MAIRE BRUIN

I can hear songs and dancing!

SHAWN BRUIN

Stay with me!

MAIRE BRUIN

I think that I would stay—and yet—and yet—

THE CHILD

White bird!

Come, little bird with crest of gold!

MAIRE BRUIN [very softly].

And yet—

THE CHILD

Come, little bird with silver feet!  
[MAIRE dies and the CHILD goes.

SHAWN BRUIN

She is dead!

FATHER HART

Thus do the evil spirits snatch their prey  
Almost out of the very hand of God;  
And day by day their power is more and more,  
And men and women leave old paths, for pride  
Comes knocking with thin knuckles on the heart.

A VOICE [singing outside.]

The wind blows out of the gates of the day,  
The wind blows over the lonely of heart,  
And the lonely of heart is withered away,  
While the faeries dance in a place apart,  
Shaking their milk-white feet in a ring,  
Tossing their milk-white arms in the air;  
For they hear the wind laugh and murmur  
and sing  
Of a land where even the old are fair,  
And even the wise are merry of tongue;  
But I heard a reed of Coolaney say,  
When the wind has laughed and murmured  
and sung,  
The lonely of heart is withered away!

[The song is taken up by many voices, who sing loudly, as if in triumph. Some of the voices seem to come from within the house.

# FRANCIS THOMPSON

[1859-1907.]

## DAISY

[1893.]

WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown  
Six foot out of the turf,  
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—  
O the breath of the distant surf!—

The hills look over on the South,  
And southward dreams the sea;  
And, with the sea-breeze hand in hand,  
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry  
Red for the gatherer springs,  
Two children did we stray and talk  
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,  
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine:  
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins  
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,  
Nor knew her own sweet way;  
But there's never a bird so sweet a song  
Thronged in whose throat that day!

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington  
On the turf and on the spray;  
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills  
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed  
face!

She gave me token three:—

A look, a word of her winsome mouth,  
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,  
A still word,—strings of sand!  
And yet they made my wild, wild heart  
Fly down to her little hand.

For, standing artless as the air,  
And candid as the skies,

She took the berries with her hand,  
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end:  
Their scent survives their close,  
But the rose's scent is bitterness  
To him that loved the rose!

She looked a little wistfully,  
Then went her sunshine way:—  
The sea's eye had a mist on it,  
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,  
She went, and left in me  
The pang of all the partings gone,  
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul  
Was sad that she was glad;  
At all the sadness in the sweet,  
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still  
Look up with soft replies,  
And take the berries with her hand,  
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,  
That is not paid with moan;  
For we are born in others' pain,  
And perish in our own.

## THE POPPY

TO MONICA

[1893.]

SUMMER set lip to earth's bosom bare,  
And left the flushed print in a poppy there:  
Like a yawn of fire from the grass it came,  
And the fanning wind puffed it to flapping  
flame.

With burnt mouth, red like a lion's, it  
drank  
The blood of the sun as he slaughtered  
sank,

And dipped its cup in the purplure shine  
When the eastern conduits ran with wine;

Till it grew lethargied with fierce bliss,  
And hot as a swinked gipsy is,  
And drowsed in sleepy savageries,  
With mouth wide a-pout for a sultry kiss.

A child and man paced side by side,  
Treading the skirts of eventide;  
But between the clasp of his hand and hers  
Lay, felt not, twenty withered years.

She turned, with the rout of her dusk  
South hair,  
And saw the sleeping gipsy there;  
And snatched and snapped it in swift child's  
whim,

With—"Keep it, long as you live!"—to him.

And his smile, as nymphs from their laving  
meres,  
Trembled up from a bath of tears;

And joy, like a mew sea-rock'd apart,  
Tossed on the wave of his troubled heart.

For he saw what she did not see,  
That—as kindled by its own fervency—  
The verge shrivelled inward smoulderingly:

And suddenly 'twixt his hand and hers  
He knew the twenty withered years—  
No flower, but twenty shrivelled years.

"Was never such thing until this hour,"  
Low to his heart he'd said; "the flower  
Of sleep brings wakening to me,  
And of oblivion, memory.

"Was never this thing to me," he said,  
"Though with bruised poppies my feet are  
red!"

And again to his own heart very low:  
"O child! I love, for I love and know;

"But you, who love nor know at all  
The diverse chambers in Love's guest-hall,  
Where some rise early, few sit long:  
In how differing accents hear the throng  
His great Pentecostal tongue;

"Who know not love from amity,  
Nor my reported self from me;  
A fair fit gift is this, meseems,  
You give—this withering flower of dreams.

"O frankly fickle, and fickly true,  
Do you know what the days will do to you?  
To your Love and you what the days will  
do,  
O frankly fickle, and fickly true?

"You have loved me, Fair, three lives—or  
days:  
"Twill pass with the passing of my face.  
But where I go, your face goes too,  
To watch lest I play false to you.

"I am but, my sweet, your foster-lover,  
Knowing well when certain years are over  
You vanish from me to another;  
Yet I know, and love, like the foster-  
mother.

"So, frankly fickle, and fickly true!  
For my brief life-while I take from you  
This token, fair and fit, meseems,  
For me—this withering flower of dreams."

The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its  
head,  
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread:  
The goodly grain and the sun-flushed  
sleeper  
The reaper reaps, and Time the reaper.

I hang 'mid men my needless head,  
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread:

The goodly men and the sun-hazed sleeper  
Time shall reap; but after the reaper  
The world shall glean of me, me the  
sleeper!

Love, love! your flower of withered dream  
In leavèd rhyme lies safe, I deem,  
Sheltered and shut in a nook of rhyme,  
From the reaper man, and his reaper Time.

Love! I fall into the claws of Time:  
But lasts within a leavèd rhyme  
All that the world of me esteems—  
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.

### THE MAKING OF VIOLA

[1893.]

#### I

##### THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

SPIN, daughter Mary, spin,  
Twirl your wheel with silver din;  
Spin, daughter Mary, spin,  
Spin a tress for Viola.

##### ANGELS

Spin, Queen Mary, a  
Brown tress for Viola!

#### II

##### THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Weave, hands angelical,  
Weave a woof of flesh to pall—  
Weave, hands angelical—  
Flesh to pall our Viola.

##### ANGELS

Weave, singing brothers, a  
Velvet flesh for Viola!

#### III

##### THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Scoop, young Jesus, for her eyes,  
Wood-brown pools of Paradise—  
Young Jesus, for the eyes,  
For the eyes of Viola.

##### ANGELS

Tint, Prince Jesus, a  
Dusky eye for Viola!

#### IV

##### THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Cast a star therein to drown,  
Like a torch in cavern brown,  
Sink a burning star to drown  
Whelmed in eyes of Viola.

##### ANGELS

Lave, Prince Jesus, a  
Star in eyes of Viola!

## V

## THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Breathe, Lord Paraclete,  
To a bubbled crystal meet—  
Breathe, Lord Paraclete—  
Crystal soul for Viola.

## ANGELS

Breathe, Regal Spirit, a  
Flashing soul for Viola!

## VI

## THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

Child-angels, from your wings  
Fall the roseal hoverings,  
Child-angels, from your wings  
On the cheeks of Viola.

## ANGELS

Linger, rosy reflex, a  
Quenchless stain, on Viola!

## VII

ALL THINGS BEING ACCOMPLISHED, SAITH THE  
FATHER OF HEAVEN:

Bear her down, and bearing, sing,  
Bear her down on spyless wing,  
Bear her down, and bearing, sing,  
With a sound of viola.

## ANGELS

Music as her name is, a  
Sweet sound of Viola!

## VIII

Wheeling angels, past espial,  
Danced her down with sound of viol;  
Wheeling angels, past espial,  
Descanting on "Viola."

## ANGELS

Sing, in our footing, a  
Lovely lilt of "Viola!"

## IX

Baby smiled, mother wailed,  
Earthward while the sweetling sailed;  
Mother smiled, baby wailed,  
When to earth came Viola.

## AND HER ELDERS SHALL SAY:

So soon have we taught you a  
Way to weep, poor Viola!

## X

Smile, sweet baby, smile,  
For you will have weeping-while;  
Native in your Heaven is smile,—  
But your weeping, Viola?

Whence your smiles, we know, but ah!  
Whence your weeping, Viola?—  
Our first gift to you is a  
Gift of tears, my Viola!

## EX ORE INFANTUM

[1893.]

LITTLE JESUS, wast Thou shy  
Once, and just so small as I?  
And what did it feel like to be  
Out of Heaven, and just like me?  
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,  
And ask where all the angels were?

I should think that I would cry  
For my house all made of sky;  
I would look about the air,  
And wonder where my angels were;  
And at waking 'twould distress me—  
*at touch of Blas*

Hadst Thou ever any toys,  
Like us little girls and boys?  
And didst Thou play in heaven with all  
The angels, that were not too tall,  
With stars for marbles? Did the things  
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,  
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?  
And did they tire sometimes, being young,  
And make the prayer seem very long?  
And dost Thou like it best, that we  
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?  
I used to think, before I knew,  
The prayer not said unless we do.  
And did Thy Mother at the night  
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?  
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,  
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all  
That it feels like to be small:  
And Thou know'st I cannot pray  
To Thee in my father's way—  
When Thou wast so little, say,  
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way?

So, a little Child, come down  
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;  
Take me by the hand and walk,  
And listen to my baby-talk.  
To Thy Father show my prayer  
(He will look, Thou art so fair),  
And say: "O Father, I, Thy Son,  
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue  
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

SCALA JACOBI PORTAQUE  
EBURNEA

[1895.]

HER soul from earth to Heaven lies,  
Like the ladder of the vision,  
Whereon go  
To and fro,  
In ascension and demission,  
Star-flecked feet of Paradise.

Now she is drawn up from me,  
All my angels, wet-eyed, tristful,  
    Gaze from great  
    Heaven's gate

Like pent children, very wistful,  
That below a playmate see.

Dream-dispensing face of hers!  
Ivory port which loosed upon me  
    Wings, I wist,  
    Whose amethyst  
Trepidations have forgone me,—  
Hesper's filmy traffickers!

### BEFORE HER PORTRAIT IN YOUTH

[1895.]

AS LOVERS, banished from their lady's face,  
And hopeless of her grace,  
Fashion a ghostly sweetness in its place,  
Fondly adore  
Some stealth-won cast attire she wore,  
    A kerchief, or a glove:  
    And at the lover's beck

    Into the glove there fleets the hand,  
    Or at impetuous command  
Up from the kerchief floats the virgin neck:

So I, in very lowlihead of love,—  
    Too shyly reverencing  
To let one thought's light footfall smooth  
Tread near the living, consecrated thing,—  
    Treasure me thy cast youth.

This outworn vesture, tenantless of thee,  
    Hath yet my knee,  
For that, with show and semblance fair  
    Of the past Her  
Who once the beautiful, discarded raiment  
    bare,

    It cheatheth me.  
As gale to gale drifts breath  
    Of blossoms' death,  
So dropping down the years from hour to  
    hour

This dead youth's scent is wafted me to  
    day:  
I sit, and from the fragrance dream the  
    flower.

So, then, she looked (I say);  
    And so her front sank down  
Heavy beneath the poet's iron crown:  
    On her mouth museful sweet—  
    (Even as the twin lips meet)  
    Did thought and sadness greet:

    Sighs  
    In those mournful eyes  
So put on visibilities;  
As viewless ether turns, in deep on deep,  
    to dyes.

Thus, long ago,  
She kept her meditative paces slow  
Through maiden meads, with wavèd shadow  
    and gleam  
Of locks half-lifted on the winds of dream,

Till love up-caught her to his chariot's glow.  
Yet, voluntary, happier Proserpine,  
    This drooping flower of youth thou lettest  
    fall

I, faring in the cockshut-light, astray,  
    Find on my 'lated way,  
And stoop, and gather for memorial,  
And lay it on my bosom, and make it mine.  
To this, the all of love the stars allow me,  
    I dedicate and vow me.

I reach back through the days  
A trothed hand to the dead the last trump  
    shall not raise.

The water-wraith that cries  
From those eternal sorrows of thy pictured  
    eyes

Entwines and draws me down their sound-  
    less intricacies!

*Splendor of death of slumber*  
**THE HOUND OF HEAVEN**

[Composed 1891.—Published 1895.]

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the  
    days; *of Heaven Abounding*

I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways  
    Of my own mind; and in the mist of  
    tears

I hid from Him, and under running laugh-  
    ter.

Up vistaed hopes I sped;  
    And shot, precipitated,  
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,  
From those strong Feet that followed, fol-  
    lowed after.

But with unhurrying chase,  
    And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
    They beat—and a Voice beat  
    More instant than the Feet—  
    "All things betray thee, who betrayest  
    Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,  
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,  
    Trellised with intertwining charities;  
(For, though I knew His love Who fol-  
    lowèd,

    Yet was I sore adread  
Lest, having Him, I must have naught be-  
    side);  
But, if one little casement parted wide,  
    The gust of His approach would clash it  
    to.

Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pur-  
    sue.

Across the margent of the world I fled,  
    And troubled the gold gateways of the  
    stars,  
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;  
    Fretted to dulcet jars

And silv'rn chatter the pale ports o' the moon.  
I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;  
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over

From this tremendous Lover!  
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!  
I tempted all His servitors, but to find  
My own betrayal in their constancy,  
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,  
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.

To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;  
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.

But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,  
The long savannahs of the blue;  
Or whether, Thunder-driven,  
They clanged his chariot 'twart a heaven

Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:  
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.

Still with unhurrying chase,  
And unperturbèd pace,  
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,  
Came on the following Feet,  
And a Voice above their beat —  
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed  
In face of man or maid;  
But still within the little children's eyes  
Seems something, something that replies;

*They at least are for me, surely for me!*  
I turned me to them very wistfully;  
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair

With dawning answers there,  
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.  
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's— share  
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;

Let me greet you lip to lip,  
Let me twine with you caresses,  
Wantoning  
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,

Banqueting  
With her in her wind-walled palace,  
Underneath her azured dais,  
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,

From a chalice

Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."

So it was done:  
*I* in their delicate fellowship was one —  
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrerries.

I knew all the swift importings

On the wilful face of skies;  
I knew how the clouds arise  
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;  
All that's born or dies  
Rose and drooped with — made them shapers

Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine —  
With them joyed and was bereaven.  
I was heavy with the even,  
When she lit her glimmering tapers  
Round the day's dead sanctities.

I laughed in the morning's eyes.  
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,

Heaven and I wept together,  
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;

Against the red throb of its sunset-heart  
I laid my own to beat,  
And share commingling heat;

But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.

In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.

For ah! we know not what each other says,  
These things and I; in sound *I* speak —  
*Their* sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;

Let her, if she would owe me,  
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me

The breasts o' her tenderness:  
Never did any milk of hers once bless

My thirsting mouth.  
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,  
With unperturbèd pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;  
And past those noised Feet

A voice comes yet more fleet —

"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!  
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,

• And smitten me to my knee;  
I am defenceless utterly.  
I slept, methinks, and woke,

And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.

In the rash lustihead of my young powers,  
I shook the pillaring hours  
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with

smears,

I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years —

My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.

My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,

Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.

Yea, faileth now even dream  
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;  
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blos-  
somy twist

I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,  
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account  
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.

Ah! is Thy love indeed  
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,  
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?

Ah! must —

Designer infinite! —

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou  
canst limn with it?

My freshness spent its wavering shower i'  
the dust;

And now my heart is as a broken fount,  
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down  
ever

From the dank thoughts that shiver  
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?  
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?  
I dimly guess what Time in mists con-  
founds;

Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds  
From the hid battlements of Eternity;  
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly  
wash again.

But not ere him who summoneth  
I first have seen, enwound  
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-  
crowned;  
His name I know, and what his trumpet  
saith.

Whether man's heart or life it be which  
yields

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields  
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit  
Comes on at hand the bruit;  
That Voice is round me like a bursting  
sea:

"And is thy earth so marred,  
Shattered in shard on shard?  
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest  
Me!

Strange, piteous, futile thing,  
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?  
Seeing none but I makes much of naught"  
(He said),

"And human love needs human meriting:  
How hast thou merited —  
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?  
Alack, thou knowest not  
How little worthy of any love thou art!  
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee  
Save Me, save only Me?"

All which I took from thee I did but take,  
Not for thy harms,  
But just that thou might'st seek it in My  
arms.

All which thy child's mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at  
home:

Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:  
Is my gloom, after all,  
Shade of His hand, outstretched caress-  
ingly?

"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,  
I am He Whom thou seekest!  
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest  
Me."

### TO THE DEAD CARDINAL OF WESTMINSTER

[Henry Edward Manning, Died January, 1892.]

[1895.]

I WILL not perturbate  
Thy Paradisal state  
With praise  
Of thy dead days;

To the new-heavened say, —  
"Spirit, thou wert fine clay":  
This do,  
Thy praise who knew.

Therefore my spirit clings  
Heaven's porter by the wings,  
And holds  
Its gated golds

Apart, with thee to press  
A private business; —  
Whence,  
Deign me audience.

Anchorite, who didst dwell  
With all the world for cell,  
My soul  
Round me doth roll

A sequestration bare.  
Too far alike we were,  
Too far  
Dissimilar.

For its burning fruitage I  
Do climb the tree o' the sky;  
Do prize  
Some human eyes.

You smelt the Heaven-blossoms,  
And all the sweet embosoms  
The dear  
Uranian year.

Those Eyes my weak gaze shuns,  
Which to the suns are Suns,  
Did  
Not affray your lid.

The carpet was let down  
(With golden moultings strown)  
For you  
Of the angels' blue.

But I, ex-Paradised,  
The shoulder of your Christ  
Find high  
To lean thereby.

So flaps my helpless sail,  
Bellying with neither gale,  
Of Heaven  
Nor Orcus even.

Life is coquetry  
Of Death, which wearies me,  
Too sure  
Of the amour;

A tiring-room where I  
Death's divers garments try,  
Till fit  
Some fashion sit.

It seemeth me too much  
I do rehearse for such  
A mean  
And single scene.

The sandy glass hence bear—  
Antique remembrancer;  
My veins  
Do spare its pains.

With secret sympathy  
My thoughts repeat in me  
Infirm  
The turn o' the worm

Beneath my appointed sod;  
The grave is in my blood;  
I shake  
To winds that take

Its grasses by the top;  
The rains thereon that drop  
Perturb  
With drip acerb

My subtly answering soul;  
The feet across its knoll  
Do jar  
Me from afar.

As sap foretastes the spring;  
As Earth ere blossoming  
Thrills  
With far daffodils,

And feels her breast turn sweet  
With the unconceivèd wheat;  
So doth  
My flesh foreloathe

The abhorred spring of Dis,  
With seething prescience  
Affirm  
The preparate worm.

I have no thought that I,  
When at the last I die,  
Shall reach  
To gain your speech.

But you, should that be so,  
May very well, I know,  
May well  
To me in hell

With recognising eyes  
Look from your Paradise—  
“God bless  
Thy hopelessness!”

Call, holy soul, O call  
The hosts angelical,  
And say,—  
“See, far away

“Lies one I saw on earth;  
One stricken from his birth  
With curse  
Of destinate verse.

“What place doth He ye serve  
For such sad spirit reserve,—  
Given,  
In dark lieu of Heaven,

“The impitiable Dæmon,  
Beauty, to adore and dream on,  
To be  
Perpetually

“Hers, but she never his?  
He reapeth miseries;  
Foreknows  
His wages woes;

“He lives detached days;  
He serveth not for praise;  
For gold  
He is not sold;

“Deaf is he to world's tongue;  
He scorneth for his song  
The loud  
Shouts of the crowd;

“He asketh not world's eyes;  
Not to world's ears he cries;  
Saith, ‘These  
Shut, if you please’;

"He measureth world's pleasure,  
World's ease, as Saints might measure;  
For hire  
Just love entire

"He asks, not grudging pain;  
And knows his asking vain,  
And cries —  
'Love! Love!' and dies,

"In guerdon of long duty,  
Unowned by Love or Beauty;  
And goes —  
Tell, tell, who knows!

"Aliens from Heaven's worth,  
Fine beasts who nose i' the earth,  
Do there  
Reward prepare.

"But are *his* great desires  
Food but for nether fires?  
Ah me,  
A mystery!

"Can it be his alone,  
To find, when all is known,  
That what  
He solely sought

"Is lost, and thereto lost  
All that its seeking cost?  
That he  
Must finally,

"Through sacrificial tears  
And anchoretic years,  
Tryst  
With the sensualist?"

So ask; and if they tell  
The secret terrible,  
Good friend,  
I pray thee send

Some high gold embassage  
To teach my unripe age.  
Tell!  
Lest my feet walk hell.

#### ORIENT ODE

[1897.]

Lo, IN the sanctuaried East,  
Day, a dedicated priest  
In all his robes pontifical exprest,  
Lifteth slowly, lifteth sweetly,  
From out its Orient tabernacle drawn,  
Yon orbèd sacrament confest  
Which sprinkles benediction through the  
dawn;  
And when the grave procession 's ceased,  
The earth with due illustrious rite  
Blessed,— ere the frail fingers feately  
Of twilight, violet-cassocked acolyte,

His sacerdotal stoles unvest —  
Sets, for high close of the mysterious feast,  
The sun in august exposition meetly  
Within the flaming monstrance of the West.

*O salutaris hostia,  
Quae coeli pandis ostium!*  
Through breached darkness' rampart, a  
Divine assaulter, art thou come!

God, whom none may live and mark,  
Borne within thy radiant ark! —  
While the Earth, a joyous David,  
Dances before thee from the dawn to dark.  
The moon, O leave, pale ruined Eve;  
Behold her fair and greater daughter\*  
Offers to thee her fruitful water,  
Which at thy first white *Ave* shall conceive!  
Thy gazes do on simple her  
Desirable allures confer;  
What happy comelinesses rise  
Beneath thy beautifying eyes!  
Who was, indeed, at first a maid  
Such as, with sighs, misgives she is not fair,  
And secret views herself afraid,  
Till flatteries sweet provoke the charms they  
swear:

Yea, thy gazes, blissful lover,  
Make the beauties they discover!  
What dainty guiles and treacheries caught  
From artful prompting of love's artless  
thought  
Her lowly loveliness teach her to adorn,  
When thy plumes shiver against the con-  
scious gates of morn!

And so the love which is thy dower,  
Earth, though her first-frightened breast  
Against the exigent boon protest,  
(For she, poor maid, of her own power  
Has nothing in herself, not even love,  
But an unwitting void thereof),  
Gives back to thee in sanctities of flower;  
And holy odours do her bosom invest,  
That sweeter grows for being prest:  
Though dear recoil, the tremorous nurse of  
joy,  
From thine embrace still startles coy,  
Till Phosphor lead, at thy returning hour,  
The laughing captive from the wishing  
West.

Nor the majestic heavens less  
Thy formidable sweets approve,  
Thy dreads and thy delights confess  
That do draw, and that remove.  
Thou as a lion roar'st, O Sun,  
Upon thy satellites' vexèd heels;  
Before thy terrible hunt thy planets run;  
Each in his frightened orbit wheels,  
Each flies through inassuageable chase,  
Since the hunt o' the world begun,  
The puissant approaches of thy face,

\* The Earth.

And yet thy radiant leash he feels.  
Since the hunt o' the world begun,  
Lashed with terror, leashed with longing,  
The mighty course is ever run;  
Pricked with terror, leashed with longing,  
Thy rein they love, and thy rebuke they  
shun.

Since the hunt o' the world began,  
With love that trembleth, fear that loveth,  
Thou join'st the woman to the man;  
And Life with Death  
In obscure nuptials moveth,  
Commingling alien, yet affinèd, breath.

Thou art the incarnated Light  
Whose Sire is aboriginal, and beyond  
Death and resurgence of our day and night;  
From him is thy vicegerent wand  
With double potency of the black and white.  
Giver of Love, and Beauty, and Desire,  
The terror, and the loveliness, and purging,  
The deathfulness and lifefulness of fire!  
Samson's riddling meanings merging  
In thy twofold sceptre meet:  
Out of thy minatory might,  
Burning Lion, burning Lion,  
Comes the honey of all sweet,  
And out of thee, the eater, comes forth  
meat.

And though, by thine alternate breath,  
Every kiss thou dost inspire  
Echoeth  
Back from the windy vaultages of death;  
Yet thy clear warranty above  
Augurs the wings of death too must  
Occult reverberations stir of love  
Crescent and life incredible;  
That even the kisses of the just  
Go down not unresurgent to the dust.  
Yea, not a kiss which I have given,  
But shall triumph upon my lips in heaven,  
Or cling a shameful fungus there in hell.

Know'st thou me not, O Sun? Yea, well  
Thou know'st the ancient miracle,  
The children know'st of Zeus and May;  
And still thou teachest them, O splendid  
Brother,

To incarnate, the antique way,  
The truth which is their heritance from their  
Sire  
In sweet disguise of flesh from their sweet  
Mother.

My fingers thou hast taught to con  
Thy flame-chorded psalterion,  
Till I can translate into mortal wire—  
Till I can translate passing well—  
The heavenly harping harmony,  
Melodious, sealed, inaudible,  
Which makes the dulcet psalter of the  
world's desire.

Thou whisperest in the Moon's white ear,  
And she does whisper into mine,—

By night together, I and she—  
With her virgin voice divine,  
The things I cannot half so sweetly tell  
As she can sweetly speak, I sweetly hear.

By her, the Woman, does Earth live, O  
Lord,  
Yet she for Earth, and both in thee.  
Light out of light!  
Resplendent and prevailing Word  
Of the Unheard!  
Not unto thee, great Image, not to thee  
Did the wise heathen bend an idle knee;  
And in an age of faith grown frore  
If I too shall adore,  
Be it accounted unto me  
A bright scintiall idolatry!  
God has given thee visible thunders  
To utter thine apocalypse of wonder  
And what want I of prophecy,  
That at the sounding from thy station  
Of thy flagrant trumpet, see  
The seals that melt, the open revelation?  
Or who a God-persuading angel needs,  
That only heeds  
The rhetoric of thy burning deeds?  
Which but to sing, if it may be,  
In worship-warranting moiety  
So I would win  
In such a song as hath within  
A smouldering core of mystery,  
Brimmed with nimbler meanings up  
Than hasty Gideons in their hands may

sup;—  
Lo, my suit pleads  
That thou, Isaian coal of fire,  
Touch from yon altar my poor mouth's  
desire,  
And the reluctant song take for thy sacred  
meeds.

To thine own shape  
Thou round'st the chrysolite of the grape,  
Bind'st thy gold lightnings in his veins;  
Thou stor'est the white garners of the rains.  
Destroyer and preserver, thou  
Who medicinest sickness, and to health  
Art the unthankèd marrow of its wealth;  
To those apparent sovereignties we bow  
And bright appurtenances of thy brow!  
Thy proper blood dost thou not give,  
That Earth, the gusty Mænad, drink and  
dance?

Art thou not life of them that live?  
Yea, in glad twinkling advent, thou dost  
dwell

Within our body as a tabernacle!  
Thou bittest with thine ordinance  
The jaws of Time, and thou dost mete  
The unsustainable treading of his feet.  
Thou to thy spousal universe  
Art Husband, she thy Wife and Church;  
Who in most dusk and vidual curch,

Her Lord being hence,  
Keeps her cold sorrows by thy hearse.  
The heavens renew their innocence  
And morning state  
But by thy sacrament communicate;  
Their weeping night the symbol of our  
prayers,  
Our darkened search,  
And sinful vigil desolate.  
Yea, biune in imploring dumb,  
Essential Heavens and corporal Earth  
await;  
The Spirit and the Bride say: Come!  
Lo, of thy Magians I the least  
Haste with my gold, my incenses and  
myrrhs,  
To thy desired epiphany, from the spiced  
Regions and odorous of Song's traded East.  
Thou, for the life of all that live  
The victim daily born and sacrificed;  
To whom the pinion of this longing verse  
Beats but with fire which first thyself did  
give,  
To thee, O Sun—or is 't perchance, to  
Christ?

Ay, if men say that on all high heaven's  
face  
The saintly signs I trace  
Which round my stolèd altars hold their  
solemn place,  
Amen, amen! For oh, how could it be,—  
When I with winged feet had run  
Through all the windy earth about,  
Quested its secret of the sun,  
And heard what thing the stars together  
shout,—  
I should not heed thereout  
Consenting counsel won:—  
“By this, O Singer, know we if thou see.  
When men shall say to thee: Lo! Christ  
is here,  
When men shall say to thee: Lo! Christ  
is there,  
Believe them: yea, and this—then art thou  
seer,  
When all thy crying clear  
Is but: Lo here! lo there!—ah me, lo  
everywhere!”

## TO DAISIES

[1897.]

AH, drops of gold in whitening flame  
Burning, we know your lovely name—  
Daisies, that little children pull!  
Like all weak things, over the strong  
Ye do not know your power for wrong,  
And much abuse your feebleness.  
Weak maids, with flutter of a dress,

Increase most heavy tyrannies;  
And vengeance unto heaven cries  
For multiplied injustice of dove-eyes.  
Daisies, that little children pull,  
As ye are weak, be merciful!  
O hide your eyes! they are to me  
Beautiful insupportably.  
Or be but conscious ye are fair,  
And I your loveliness could bear;  
But, being fair so without art,  
Ye vex the silted memories of my heart!

As a pale ghost yearning strays  
With sundered gaze,  
Mid corporal presences that are  
To it impalpable—such a bar  
Sets you more distant than the morning-  
star.  
Such wonder is on you and amaze,  
I look and marvel if I be  
Indeed the phantom, or are ye?  
The light is on your innocence  
Which fell from me.  
The fields ye still inhabit whence  
My world-acquainted treading strays,  
The country where I did commence;  
And though ye shine to me so near,  
So close to gross and visible sense,  
Between us lies impassable year on year.  
To other time and far-off place  
Belongs your beauty: silent thus,  
Though to others naught you tell,  
To me your ranks are rumorously  
Of an ancient miracle.

Vain does my touch your petals graze,  
I touch you not; and, though ye blossom  
here,  
Your roots are fast in alienated days.  
Ye there are anchored, while Time's stream  
Has swept me past them: your white ways  
And infantile delights do seem  
To look in on me like a face,  
Dead and sweet, come back through dream,  
With tears, because for old embrace  
It has no arms. These hands did toy,  
Children, with you when I was child,  
And in each other's eyes we smiled:  
Not yours, not yours the grievous-fair  
Apparelling  
With which you wet mine eyes; you wear,  
Ah me, the garment of the grace  
I wove you when I was a boy;  
O mine, and not the year's, your stolen  
Spring!  
And since ye wear it,  
Hide your sweet selves! I cannot bear it.  
For, when ye break the cloven earth  
With your young laughter and endearment,  
No blossomy carillon 'tis of mirth  
To me; I see my slaughtered joy  
Bursting its cerement.

## TO A SNOW-FLAKE

[1897.]

WHAT heart could have thought you?—  
 Past our devial  
 (O filigree petal!)  
 Fashioned so purely,  
 Fragilely, surely,  
 From what Paradisal  
 Imagineless metal,  
 Too costly for cost?  
 Who hammered you, wrought you,  
 From argentine vapour?—  
 "God was my shaper.  
 Passing surmisal,  
 He hammered, He wrought me,  
 From curled silver vapour,  
 To lust of His mind:—  
 Thou could'st not have thought me!  
 So purely, so palely,  
 Tinily, surely,  
 Mightily, frailly,  
 Insculped and embossed,  
 With His hammer of wind,  
 And His graver of frost."

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

'IN NO STRANGE LAND'

[1913.]

O WORLD invisible, we view thee,  
 O World intangible, we touch thee,  
 O World unknowable, we know thee,  
 Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!  
 Does the fish soar to find the ocean,  
 The eagle plunge to find the air—  
 That we ask of the stars in motion  
 If they have rumour of thee there?  
 Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
 And our benumbed conceiving soars!—  
 The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
 Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—  
 Turn but a stone and start a wing!  
 'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,  
 That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)  
 Cry,—and upon thy so sore loss  
 Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
 Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing  
 Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
 Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;  
 And lo, Christ walking on the water,  
 Not of Genesaretin, but Thames!

## ENVOY

Go, songs, for ended is our brief, sweet  
 play;  
 Go, children of swift joy and tardy sor-  
 row;  
 And some are sung, and that was yester-  
 day,  
 And some unsung, and that may be to-  
 morrow.

Go forth; and if it be o'er stony way,  
 Old joy can lend what newer grief must  
 borrow;  
 And it was sweet, and that was yesterday,  
 And sweet is sweet, though purchasèd  
 with sorrow.

Go, songs, and come not back from your  
 far way;  
 And if men ask you why ye smile and  
 sorrow,  
 Tell them ye grieve, for your hearts know  
 To-day,  
 Tell them ye smile, for your eyes know  
 To-morrow.

In "Last Poems" - no 37 will last, says Tennyson.  
No 15 - "Eight o'clock", of a man about to be hanged.

Powers of expression!

# A. E. HOUSMAN

[1859—]

Professor of Latin in Cambridge U.  
most distinguished lecturer  
today -  
of most consecutive visitors  
of fellow literati.

## SELECTIONS FROM A SHROPSHIRE LAD

[1896.]

### IV

#### REVEILLE

WAKE: the silver dusk returning  
Up the beach of darkness brims,  
And the ship of sunrise burning  
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,  
Trampled to the floor it spanned,  
And the tent of night in tatters  
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:  
Hear the drums of morning play;  
Hark, the empty highways crying  
"Who'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,  
Forelands beacon, belfries call;  
Never lad that trod on leather  
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lads: thews that lie and cumber  
Sunlit pallets never thrive;  
Morns abed and daylight slumber  
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover:  
Breath's a ware that will not keep  
Up, lad: when the journey's over  
There'll be time enough to sleep.

### IX

On moonlit heath and lonesome bank  
The sheep beside me graze;  
And yon the gallows used to clank  
Fast by the four cross ways.

A careless shepherd once would keep  
The flocks by moonlight there,\*  
And high amongst the glimmering sheep  
The dead man stood on air.

They hang us now in Shrewsbury jail:  
The whistles blow forlorn,  
And trains all night groan on the rail  
To men that die at morn.

There sleeps in Shrewsbury jail tonight,  
Or wakes, as may betide,  
A better lad, if things went right,  
Than most that sleep outside.

\* Hanging in chains was called keeping sheep by moonlight.

And naked to the hangman's noose  
The morning clocks will ring  
A neck God made for other use  
Than strangling in a string.

And sharp the link of life will snap,  
And dead on air will stand  
Heels that held up as straight a chap  
As treads upon the land.

So here I'll watch the night and wait  
To see the morning shine,  
When he will hear the stroke of eight  
And not the stroke of nine;

And wish my friend as sound a sleep  
As lads' I did not know,  
That shepherded the moonlit sheep  
A hundred years ago.

### XII

When I watch the living meet,  
And the moving pageant file  
Warm and breathing through the street  
Where I lodge a little while,

If the heats of hate and lust  
In the house of flesh are strong,  
Let me mind the house of dust  
Where my sojourn shall be long.

In the nation that is not  
Nothing stands that stood before;  
There revenges are forgot,  
And the hater hates no more;

Lovers lying two and two  
Ask not whom they sleep beside,  
And the bridegroom all night through  
Never turns him to the bride

### XIII

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard a wise man say,  
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas  
But not your heart away;  
Give pearls away and rubies  
But keep your fancy free."  
But I was one-and-twenty,  
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard him say again,  
"The heart out of the bosom  
Was never given in vain;  
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty  
And sold for endless rue."  
And I am two-and-twenty,  
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

## XIX

## TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;  
Man and boy stood cheering by,  
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,  
Shoulder-high we bring you home,  
And set you at your threshold down,  
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,  
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honours out,  
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,  
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laureled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,  
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's

## XXI

## BREDON\* HILL

IN summertime on Breton  
The bells they sound so clear;  
Round both the shires they ring them  
In steeples far and near,  
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning  
My love and I would lie,  
And see the coloured counties,  
And hear the larks so high  
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her  
In valleys miles away:  
"Come all to church, good people;  
Good people, come and pray."  
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer  
Among the springing thyme,  
"Oh, peal upon our wedding,  
And we will hear the chime,  
And come to church in time."

Pronounced Breedon.

But when the snows at Christmas  
On Breton top were strown,  
My love rose up so early  
And stole out unbeknown  
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,  
Groom there was none to see,  
The mourners followed after,  
And so to church went she,  
And would not wait for me.  
The bells they sound on Breton,  
And still the steeples hum.  
"Come all to church, good people," —  
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;  
I hear you, I will come.

## XXIV

Say, lad, have you things to do?  
Quick then, while your day's at prime.  
Quick, and if 'tis work for two,  
Here am I, man: now's your time.  
Send me now, and I shall go;  
Call me, I shall hear you call;  
Use me ere they lay me low  
Where a man's no use at all;  
Ere the wholesome flesh decay,  
And the willing nerve be numb,  
And the lips lack breath to say,  
"No, my lad, I cannot come."

## XXV

This time of year a twelvemonth past,  
When Fred and I would meet,  
We needs must jangle, till at last  
We fought and I was beat.

So then the summer fields about,  
Till rainy days began,  
Rose Harland on her Sundays out  
Walked with the better man.

The better man she walks with still,  
Though now 'tis not with Fred:  
A lad that lives and has his will  
Is worth a dozen dead.

Fred keeps the house all kinds of  
weather,  
And clay's the house he keeps;  
When Rose and I walk out together  
Stock-still lies Fred and sleeps.

## XXVI

Along the field as we came by  
A year ago, my love and I,  
The aspen over stile and stone  
Was talking to itself alone.  
"Oh who are these that kiss and pass?  
A country lover and his lass;  
Two lovers looking to be wed;  
And time shall put them both to bed,  
But she shall lie with earth above,  
And he beside another love."

And sure enough beneath the tree  
There walks another love with me,  
And overhead the aspen heaves  
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;  
And I spell nothing in their stir,  
But now perhaps they speak to her,  
And plain for her to understand  
They talk about a time at hand  
When I shall sleep with clover clad,  
And she beside another lad.

## XXVII

"Is my team ploughing,  
That I was used to drive  
And hear the harness jingle  
When I was man alive?"

Ay, the horses trample,  
The harness jingles now;  
No change though you lie under  
The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing  
Along the river shore,  
With lads to chase the leather,  
Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,  
The lads play heart and soul;  
The goal stands up, the keeper  
Stands up to keep the goal

"Is my girl happy,  
That I thought hard to leave,  
And has she tired of weeping  
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,  
She lies not down to weep:  
Your girl is well contented.  
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,  
Now I am thin and pine,  
And has he found to sleep in  
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,  
I lie as lads would choose;  
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,  
Never ask me whose.

## XXXIII

If truth in hearts that perish  
Could move the powers on high,  
I think the love I bear you  
Should make you not to die.

Sure, sure, if stedfast meaning,  
If single thought could save,  
The world might end to-morrow,  
You should not see the grave.

This long and sure-set liking,  
This boundless will to please,  
— Oh, you should live for ever  
If there were help in these.

But now, since all is idle,  
To this lost heart be kind,  
Ere to a town you journey  
Where friends are ill to find.

## XLIII

## THE IMMORTAL PART

When I meet the morning beam,  
Or lay me down at night to dream,  
I hear my bones within me say,  
"Another night, another day."

"When shall this slough of sense be cast,  
This dust of thoughts be laid at last,  
The man of flesh and soul be slain  
And the man of bone remain?

"This tongue that talks, these lungs that  
shout,  
These thews that hustle us about,  
This brain that fills the skull with schemes,  
And its humming hive of dreams,—

"These today are proud in power  
And lord it in their little hour:  
The immortal bones obey control  
Of dying flesh and dying soul.

"Tis long till eve and morn are gone:  
Slow the endless night comes on,  
And late to fulness grows the birth  
That shall last as long as earth.

"Wanderers eastward, wanderers west,  
Know you why you cannot rest?  
'Tis that every mother's son  
Travails with a skeleton.

"Lie down in the bed of dust;  
Bear the fruit that bear you must;  
Bring the eternal seed to light,  
And morn is all the same as night.

"Rest you so from trouble sore,  
Fear the heat o' the sun no more,  
Nor the snowing winter wild,  
Now you labor not with child.

"Empty vessel, garment cast,  
We that wore you long shall last.  
— Another night, another day."  
So my bones within me say.

Therefore they shall do my will  
Today while I am master still,  
And flesh and soul, now both are strong,  
Shall hale the sullen slaves along,

Before this fire of sense decay,  
This smoke of thought blow clean away,  
And leave with ancient night alone  
The stedfast and enduring bone.

## L

*Clunton and Clunbury,  
Clungunford and Clun,  
Are the quietest places  
Under the sun.*

In valleys of springs of rivers,  
By Ony and Teme and Clun,  
The country for easy livers,  
The quietest under the sun,

We still had sorrows to lighten,  
One could not be always glad,  
And lads knew trouble at Knighton  
When I was a Knighton lad.

By bridges that Thames runs under,  
In London, the town built ill,  
'Tis sure small matter for wonder  
If sorrow is with one still.

And if as a lad grows older  
The troubles he bears are more,  
He carries his griefs on a shoulder  
That handse� them long before.

Where shall one halt to deliver  
This luggage I'd lief set down?  
Not Thames, not Teme is the river,  
Nor London nor Knighton the town:  
'Tis a long way further than Knighton,  
A quieter place than Clun,  
Where doomsday may thunder and lighten  
And little 'twill matter to one.

## LI

Loitering with a vacant eye  
Along the Grecian gallery,  
And brooding on my heavy ill,  
I met a statue standing still.  
Still in marble stone stood he,  
And stedfastly he looked at me.  
"Well met," I thought the look would say,  
"We both were fashioned far away;  
We neither knew, when we were young,  
These Londoners we live among."

Still he stood and eyed me hard,  
An earnest and a grave regard:  
"What, lad, drooping with your lot?  
I too would be where I am not.  
I too survey that endless line  
Of men whose thoughts are not as mine.  
Years, ere you stood up from rest,  
On my neck the collar prest;  
Years, when you lay down your ill,  
I shall stand and bear it still.  
Courage, lad, 'tis not for long:  
Stand, quit you like stone, be strong."

So I thought his look would say;  
And light on me my trouble lay,  
And I stept out in flesh and bone  
Manful like the man of stone.

## LII

Far in a western brookland  
That bred me long ago  
The poplars stand and tremble  
By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time,  
The wanderer, marvelling why,  
Halts on the bridge to hearken  
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: no more remembered  
In fields where I was known,  
Here I lie down in London  
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,  
The wanderer halts and hears  
My soul that lingers sighing  
About the glimmering weirs.

## LIV

With rue my heart is laden  
For golden friends I had,  
For many a rose-lit maiden  
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping  
The lightfoot boys are laid;  
The rose-lit girls are sleeping  
In fields where roses fade.

## LV

Westward on the high-hilled plains  
Where for me the world began,  
Still, I think, in newer veins  
Frets the changeless blood of man.

Now that other lads than I  
Strip to bathe on Severn shore,  
They, no help, for all they try,  
Tread the mill I trod before.

There, when hueless is the west  
And the darkness hushes wide,  
Where the lad lies down to rest  
Stands the troubled dream beside.

There, on thoughts that once were mine  
Day looks down the eastern steep,  
And the youth at morning shine  
Makes the vow he will not keep.

## LXI

HUGHLEY STEEPLE  
The vane on Hughley steeple  
Veers bright, a far-known sign,  
And there lie Hughley people,  
And there lie friends of mine.

Tall in their midst the tower  
Divides the shade and sun,  
And the clock strikes the hour  
And tells the time to none.

To south the headstones cluster,  
The sunny mounds lie thick;  
The dead are more in muster  
At Hugley than the quack.  
North, for a soon-told number,  
Chill graves the sexton drives,  
And steeple-shadowed slumber  
The slayers of themselves.

To north, to south, lie parted,  
With Hugley tower above,  
The kind, the single-hearted,  
The lads I used to love.  
And, south or north, 'tis only  
A choice of friends one knows,  
And I shall ne'er be lonely  
Asleep with these or those.

## LXIII

I hoed and trenched and weeded,  
And took the flowers to fair:  
I brought them home unheeded;  
The hue was not the wear.

So up and down I sow them  
For lads like me to find,  
When I shall lie below them,  
A dead man out of mind.

Some seed the birds devour,  
And some the season mars,  
But here and there will flower  
The solitary stars,

And fields will yearly bear them  
As light-leaved spring comes on,  
And luckless lads will wear them  
When I am dead and gone.

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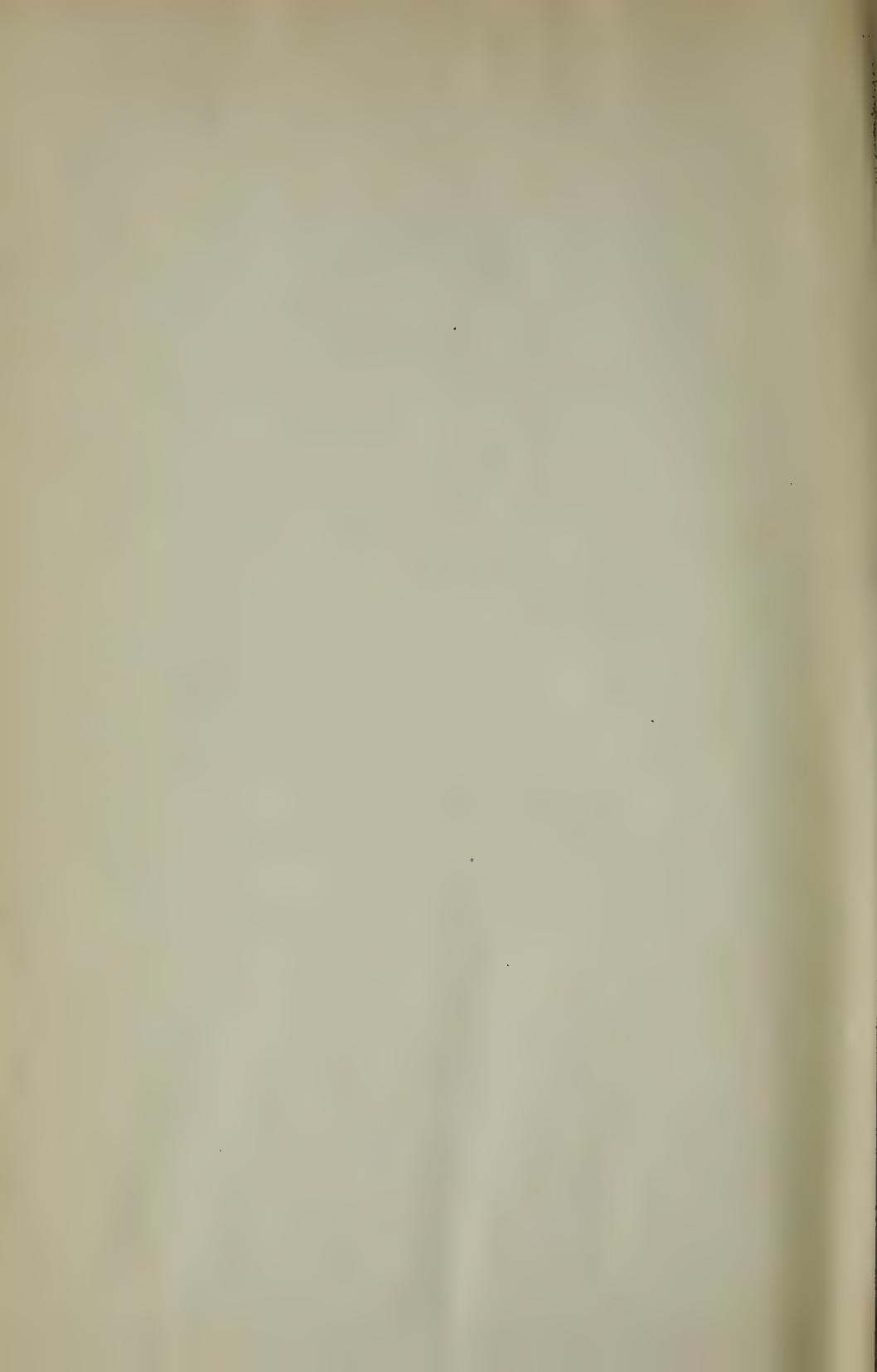














Poetzl  
for Silod cathegory  
Frank

